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THE GROTESQUE IN GEORG BÜCHNER'S "WOYZECK": FUNCTION AND FORM

by



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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled The Grotesque in Georg Büchner's "Woyzeck": Function and Form, submitted by Anne M. Frank in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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INTRODUCTION

Georg Büchner's life was short, intense and tragic. After his death in 1837, his work sank into oblivion, and not until the end of the nineteenth century was an interest in him reawakened. That a writer displaying such versatility and poetic genius should have been virtually forgotten until recently indicates that Büchner was indeed a writer ahead of his time. His sudden rediscovery and his popularity in the modern theatrical repertoire is not without significance, for in the short time that was given him, Büchner was able to break with the past and develop a new form for the drama.

Because his mode of expression was so in advance of his time, it has often been stated that the trend for modern dramatic technique was set by his work. The unique use of language and the unusual approach to character delineation left his contemporaries unimpressed, but they gave a profound impetus to the dramatists of the twentieth century.

Büchner was a political revolutionary. His youth, his idealism and his instinctive feelings for justice motivated his activities. He was profoundly concerned with the alleviation of human suffering caused by political and economic exploitation. Inspired by his active social

conscience, Büchner's writings allowed no room for idealism or sentimentality. His contempt for such an approach was expressed in a letter to his family:

...as to the so-called idealist poets, I find that they have given us almost nothing but marionettes with sky-blue noses and affected pathos, certainly not people of flesh and blood who make me feel their joy and suffering, and whose comings and going fill me with horror or admiration.¹

He was determined to present the realities of life without compromise and with complete disregard to the pretentious sensibilities of his audience.

Büchner's strong sense for realism, combined with his creative genius, gave his dramas an unprecedented vitality, and his ideas universal significance. He took his characters beyond the simple preoccupations of life, into the realm of mental and spiritual suffering; a world which rings of the despair and anguish so familiar to the modern playwright.

Because Büchner's reputation rests on his radical political activities and on the modernity of his plays, there exist two possibilities from which to analytically approach his work.

¹Georg Büchner, Werke und Briefe, ed. by Fritz Bergemann, 4. Aufl. (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1969), p. 182. "Was noch die sogenannten Idealdichter anbetrifft, so finde ich, dass sie fast nichts als Marionetten mit himmelblauen Nasen und affektiertem Pathos, aber nicht Menschen von Fleisch und Blut gegeben haben, deren Leid und Freude mich mitempfinden macht und deren Tun und Handeln mir Abscheu oder Bewunderung einflösst."

To view it in terms of his activities would be to add psychological, sociological and political definitions to the dramas at the expense of their literary merits. Similarly, to examine it for its literary merits alone would neglect important elements which gave his work a much deeper significance once the drama became a visual experience, a concrete stage reality.

By examining Büchner's work from the viewpoint of the grotesque, as this study proposes to do, the dramas will not be considered exclusively from the point of view of the authors intention, since it was certainly not the only element to give rise to the grotesque in his work. This view is much too restrictive in terms of the function which the grotesque has within the drama. It is not my intention to restrict, but rather to expand the meaning of his dramas - to discover not only what is pertinent to Büchner himself, but what his dramas can effectively reveal about life.

The proposed method is first to define the grotesque, second, to determine its structure, or 'how' the grotesque comes into being, and finally to examine the effect of its presence within the dramas, with particular reference to Woyzeck.

It is necessary to realize that Büchner was not a grotesque writer in the modern sense, and therefore stylistic devices producing a modern grotesque effect were not consciously applied. Where these literary devices are not employed, the grotesque effect may be evidenced in concrete objects and situations of a

primarily visual nature.

Büchner's dramas will also be viewed from the perspective of the modern grotesque which is decidedly different from the way the grotesque was viewed during the period in which he actually wrote. There is no overt "fantastic" or "demonic" imagery in his work for he did not write in the style of his day. Realism was already his aim at that time, and he let the actions of his characters express the disharmony and despair of the age in which they lived. Büchner spoke through them, and in some of the grotesque results we see a reflection of his own view of the discordant and uncertain world.

CHAPTER I

THE FUNCTION OF THE GROTESQUE

Whatever the grotesque has meant to those dealing in abstract principles and those concerned entirely with aesthetic values, it has recently come to mean something entirely new. As it appears today, the grotesque is infused with the mood of the twentieth century, and although it has not entirely shaken its traditional ties, it has undergone serious formal and conceptual changes.

In order to find a workable definition which can be applied now, it is not necessary to go back to the origin of the word. Over the centuries the grotesque has had such a wide variety of meanings that references to its semantic development would unnecessarily complicate the issue. Suffice it to say that it grew out of a particular style of decorative art first developed during the Italian Renaissance. Since that time, and up until the late eighteenth century, theories on the grotesque have concerned themselves largely with a descriptive analysis of specific structural distortions.

In the early part of the nineteenth century the grotesque became the object of aesthetic discussions in an attempt to categorize it along with other forms of art which were symbolic

of a higher, more pure truth. The critics were persuaded that the grotesque, because of its distortions, had no affinity to this truth. It was regarded as a frivolous form of art that contained "nothing to satisfy the understanding or inform the judgement."¹

Sir Walter Scott, describing the "fantastic mode of writing" in E.T.A. Hoffmann, saw it as one in which "the most wild and unbounded license is given to an irregular fancy, and all species of combination, however ludicrous, or however shocking, are attempted and executed without scruple."²

Rosenkranz supported this view when he characterized the grotesque as "eine Willkür, die aller Gesetze zu spotten scheint."³

Where it was related to the sublime as in the case of Victor Hugo, it seemed to be a "starting point whence one rises toward the beautiful with a fresher and keener perception." The grotesque merely served to intensify the effect of the sublime. By itself it suggested the ugly and terrible aspects

¹Sir Walter Scott, Essays on Chivalry, Romance and the Drama (London: F. Warne, n.d.), p. 291.

²Scott, p. 281.

³Karl Rosenkranz, Asthetik des Hässlichen (Königsberg: n.p., 1853), p. 221.

of nature. In art, the grotesque denoted a "thousand picturesque fancies." It implied the "ghastly antics of the witches' revels," and it gave "Satan his horns, his cloven foot and his bats' wings."⁴ In man the grotesque unfolded all his passions, vices and crimes.

For Hegel, the grotesque took on a transcendental quality. He referred specifically to Indian art which he considered to be a symbolic representation of something spiritual. Grotesque art strained to encompass universal significance, and it used colossal exaggeration to transport the imagination "into vastness which knows neither measure nor limit."⁵ Hegel felt that man was intuitively aware of the infinite, and he sought its expression through art. The constant striving of the imagination to grasp the incomprehensible created the grotesque in art.

The source of inspiration for the grotesque was one of the major criteria for the analysis of its aesthetic value during this time. There was never any question as to whether or not the grotesque was found in nature because it was generally regarded as being a product of extreme subjective fantasy not intent on approximating the objective world of things. A free and boundless fancy was considered to have produced the grotesque; and its

⁴Victor Hugo, "Preface to Cromwell: in Barrett H. Clark, European Theories of the Drama (New York: Crown, 1965), p. 359.

⁵G.W.F. Hegel, The Philosophy of Fine Art, transl. by F.P.B. Ostmaston (London: G. Bell & Son, 1920), II, 54.

inspiration often transcended the restrictive bonds of finitude in a vain attempt to express the spiritual world of things. Whatever the source, many critics of the grotesque regarded it as a frivolous art form. It surpassed artistic purity; and its distortions did not further the comprehension of ideal truth. Irrespective of the style of artistic expression, there was never any suggestion that the grotesque derived any of its characteristics from reality.

Later in the century, when romantic ideals began to lose ground, interest in the grotesque shifted to a concern with its more practical aspects. The emphasis was now placed on its application and the specific meanings derived from its manifested forms.

Both Wright⁶ and Schneegans⁷ attempted to develop a definition of the grotesque from a more psychological rather than a metaphysical or aesthetic standpoint. Wright, for instance, emphasized that the primitive love for mockery gave rise to caricature in art. Its creators

...amused themselves by turning their enemies and opponents into mockery, by laughing at their weaknesses, joking on their defects, whether physical or mental, and giving them nicknames in accordance therewith, - in fact, caricaturing them

⁶Thomas Wright, A History of Caricature & Grotesque in Literature and Art (London: Virtue Bros., 1865).

⁷Heinrich Schneegans, Geschichte der grotesken Satire (Strassburg: Trübner, 1894).

in words, or by telling stories which are calculated to excite laughter... Thus originated caricature and the grotesque in art.⁸

The term caricature in his view was almost synonymous with grotesque, and insofar as it implied mockery, grotesque art was an extreme form of satiric caricature.

The advent of the twentieth century was a modification of this formal approach to understanding the grotesque and a re-assessment of its significance beyond its practical use. Just as caricature, with its deliberate exaggerations, was able to point to a reality beyond the thing itself, so the grotesque became a device used to focus attention on another aspect of reality. It intended to provoke an awareness of a more universal truth, and in order to achieve this, the grotesque object could not exceed the limits of the natural order. It had to be constructed according to some recognizable principle.

Unlike caricature which pointed to another idea on the same level, the grotesque was directed towards a world of wider margins and greater depths than that which everyday life had to offer. In fact, it became an accepted attitude that those grotesque renderings, which rejected all natural forms in favor of the exceedingly monstrous and demonic were aesthetically worthless because they failed to show any meaning beyond a superficial absurdity. Santayana expresses it thus:

⁸Wright, p. 1.

What appears as grotesque may be intrinsically inferior or superior to the normal. That is a question of its abstract material and form. But until the new object impresses its form on our imagination, so that we can grasp its unity and proportion, it appears to us as a jumble and distortion of other forms. If this confusion is absolute, the object is simply null; it does not exist aesthetically, except by virtue of materials. But if the confusion is not absolute, and we have an inkling of the form, then we have the grotesque.⁹

As long as the grotesque remained within the limits of an aesthetic system, its meaning remained unspecific and ambiguous. Aestheticians who attempted to categorize the grotesque could not agree on whether it should belong in the realm of the sublime or the ugly, or whether it was intended as being playfully innocuous or fearsome.

The conflict existed in reference to grotesque structure and to the conditions of its creation; the artist's attitudes and intentions. Thus, some critics saw it in terms of the comic, the ludicrous, as satire and caricature, while others, looking at it from the opposite side, saw it as the terrible and demonic, saw it to be a "cosmic grimace, the expression of a tortured soul."¹⁰

⁹George Santayana, The Sense of Beauty (New York: Scribner's 1919), p. 257.

¹⁰Lee Byron Jennings, The Ludicrous Demons: Aspects of the Grotesque in German Post-Romantic Prose (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1963), p. 16.

As time progressed the concept of the grotesque gradually changed, it took on a new meaning, and today, it comprises all the disorientation and uprootedness of the modern era. In the world of novelist/playwright Friedrich Dürrenmatt, perhaps one of the major exponents of the contemporary grotesque,

Our world has led to the grotesque as well as to the atom bomb, and so it is a world like that of Hieronymus Bosch whose apocalyptic paintings are also grotesque. But the grotesque is only a way of expressing in a tangible manner, of making us perceive physically the paradoxical, the form of the unformed, the face of a world without face; and just as in our thinking today we seem to be unable to do without the concept of the paradox, so also in art, and in our world which at times seems still to exist only because the bomb exists: out of fear of the bomb."¹¹

The concept of the modern grotesque was founded upon the ruins of metaphysical idealism and it grew up in a new age where it became a symbol of life. The medieval idea of the grotesque has been abandoned. No longer is it regarded as being a diabolical playground where all kinds of satanic and irrational games are created. It no longer rises out of mystical realms, nor is it merely a fantastic play of images. It is no longer allowed its former abandon and purity of expression, for an ulterior purpose has taken possession of the grotesque and it now expresses the turmoil of the modern age. The attitude it

¹¹Friedrich Dürrenmatt, "Problems of the Theatre", TDR, III (October 1958), pp. 20-21.

has come to reflect is one of disorientation, disillusionment and despair.

The grotesque thrives in an atmosphere where an old established order is disintegrating and wasting away. A new order has not taken its place, and the absence of a firm foundation causes life to appear problematic, unreal and meaningless. Where artistic expression is emphatically pessimistic, life is drawn as a comic spectacle, a masquerade, a puppet show. The grotesque appears in a world that has forsaken noble and pure ideals. It seems to result from chaos, and it openly defies accepted values of order and rationale.

The kind of theatre that reflects this gradual process of the collapse and disintegration of a firm orientation to life still "deals with problems, conflicts and themes of tragedy such as: human fate, the meaning of existence, freedom and inevitability, the discrepancy between the absolute and the fragile human order."¹² Yet, in this new theatre, Jan Kott explains:

...the tragic element has been superseded by grotesque. Grotesque is more cruel than tragedy... In the final instance tragedy is an appraisal of human fate, a measure of the

¹² Jan Kott, Shakespeare our Contemporary, trans. by Boreslaw Taborski, Anchor Books (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966), pp. 131-132.

absolute. The grotesque is a criticism of the absolute in the name of frail human experience. That is why tragedy brings catharsis, while grotesque offers no consolation whatsoever.¹³

Living in a social and economic system that placed little stress on his spiritual significance, man was gradually forced to look at himself as merely a thing in an all-embracing mechanical order. A new philosophy cultivated new motifs in the grotesque. No longer was it important to stress the most "strange and complicated monsters, resembling centaurs, griffins, sphinxes, chimeras, rocs, and all other creatures of romantic imagination,"¹⁴ but instead, human bodies were "reduced to puppets, marionettes, and automata, and their faces frozen into masks."¹⁵

Definition

Apart from its literary usage, the grotesque today has no metaphysical overtones. In common usage it refers to almost anything that is considered to be in any way bizarre, distorted, or eccentric to everyday reality. It is put to use whenever some-

¹³Kott, pp. 130, 132.

¹⁴Scott, p. 291.

¹⁵Wolfgang Kayser, The Grottesque in Art and Literature, trans. by Ulrich Weisstein, McGraw-Hill Paperbacks (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1963), p. 183.

thing appears to be horribly frightening or morbid, or it may refer to something that is merely out of keeping with certain preconceived ideas or expectations.

The expression "grotesque" has proven to be elusive and vague, and it almost consistently defies categorizing. As commonly used, its definition is confusing because its meanings are too generalized. Because it implies among other things, extravagant distortion, incongruity or simply the unheard of, the grotesque, if applied to dramatic literature, has little value since not everything eccentric, incongruous or bizarre is of necessity grotesque. Neither does such an array of meanings further the understanding of the function the grotesque has within the drama. If it is to be used in a critical sense, the term will become meaningful only if it has specific discernible properties that can be related to all semblances of the grotesque.

Wolfgang Kayser in his study on The Grotesque in Art and Literature attempted such an approach by basing his study on grotesque works of art from which he could then extract common elements for purposes of identification. Beyond citing some of the themes and motifs of grotesque art however, he makes no systematic attempt to define the phenomenon or to establish criteria by which it could be identified. We are told that some of the favorite creatures of the grotesque artist are

animals that live in surroundings unfamiliar to man. Their movements, their physical structure and their habits are foreign in comparison to man's natural ways. Snakes, spiders, vermin of all description, toads, and other nocturnal beasts fit into this category. Also featured are bats, climbing plants, self-propelled vehicles, puppets, robots, masks, skulls, skeletons and madness.

His definition is based entirely on the impressions received from the work; the shape or the form of the object being the determinants. As he states, "the grotesque is experienced only in the act of reception."¹⁶ Although a factual description of content, or the analysis of its structural aspects could lead to a clearer understanding of the term, "we have to refer to its reception, with which we cannot dispense under any circumstances."¹⁷ He insists that this is the most important aspect in attempting a definition. The result, however, seems to be restricted by the extremely subjective nature of the process.

The basis of his definition lies in the observation that a strange and sinister quality is always a part of the world which has become grotesque.

¹⁶Kayser, p. 181.

¹⁷Ibid.

It is a world that withstands any attempt on our part to arrange its components according to a familiar scheme. Reflected in the structure of the grotesque is a collapsed world orientation. Offered instead is "the fusion of realms which we know to be separated, the abolition of the law of statics, the loss of identity, the distortion of 'natural' size and shape, the suspension of the category of objects, the destruction of personality, and the fragmentation of the historical order."¹⁸ Disintegration seems to be the key aspect in the structure of the grotesque; the disintegration of a world order. It is the everyday world that undergoes a sudden metamorphosis into one that is no longer familiar. What was once trusted and well-known is instantly transformed into what is alien and uncanny. The grotesque, as reflected in art, is the alienated world, a world in which we do not desire to live.

The element of suddenness, says Kayser, is vital to the grotesque because it presupposes contrast and juxtaposition. In other words, it assumes that something existed in a certain way, and was then suddenly changed into something else. This something else is not bound to and cannot present reality, but can be transformed into a creation that is wildly absurd and distorted. These transitions themselves need not be

¹⁸Kayser, p. 185.

logical. Often startling in their abruptness, they can be created without any attempt to soften the absurdity or reconcile the inconsistencies.

In order to feel alienated or estranged from the world, it must be assumed that there was an attachment to it to begin with. Once the grotesque is perceived, the things that have been accepted as being perfectly rational suddenly become disjointed and questionable. Our connection with the real world has been severed and we flounder for an explanation to reconcile this strange, unfamiliar intrusion into our world. If none is forthcoming, we become alienated from it even though it is still recognizable as our own. The world then becomes out of joint with acceptable standards of conformity, and we do not have the power to relate to something outside of our realm of existence. What results is a Lewis Carroll kind of world in which a sudden fall into a rabbit-hole transforms the real world so completely that everything becomes totally unrecognizable in the eyes of the beholder.

Kayser speaks of the "powers" beyond that create the grotesque world, and if there were any way to "name these powers and relate them to the cosmic order, the grotesque would lose its essential quality."¹⁹ It is through grotesque art that the irrationalism at the center of the cosmic order emerges

¹⁹Kayser, p. 185.

into being. This element is spoken of almost as if it has become objectively real, and its intrusion into the sphere of reality creates havoc in an essentially ordered existence. For the spectator it can cause a cathartic effect, what Kayser terms a "secret liberation". Grotesque art rids us of our fears of something hidden, some unfathomable unpleasantness by exposing it, by bringing it into concrete existence.

In spite of all the helplessness and horror inspired by the dark forces which lurk in and behind our world and have power to estrange it, the truly artistic portrayal effects a secret liberation. The darkness has been sighted, the ominous powers discovered, the incomprehensible force challenged.²⁰

According to Kayser, the ultimate function of the grotesque is to banish the dark powers and liberate the mind from all that is uncanny and demonic lurking in the world.

Kayser's definition of the grotesque is determined wholly by the representational aspects of grotesque art and the impressions made upon him by those works which he chose to examine. The form of the grotesque, he concludes, is unrecognizable; it cannot be categorized and therefore it does not belong to this world. Thus, the grotesque is the alienated world.

Based on distortion, the grotesque produces something that is in effect inhuman. Its shapes are alien and irrational

²⁰Kayser, p. 188.

to what is known and familiar. The source of their creation therefore cannot be of this world. The grotesque, Kayser concludes, is created by an impersonal force, what he terms as being the "powers" beyond. The creator of grotesque art is robbed of his creative freedom by these powers with the result that he cannot attempt to make sense of his work. The irrational forces exert their control over him, and the result becomes absurd and irrational.

Four descriptive categories constitute Kayser's definition of the grotesque. They can be summarized as follows:

- 1) The grotesque is the alienated world.
- 2) The grotesque is created by an impersonal force.
- 3) The creations of the grotesque are a game with the absurd.
- 4) The creations of the grotesque are an attempt to banish and exorcise the demonic element in the world.

In modern drama, where the grotesque is created in a theme or an idea based on reality, the demonic quality stressed by Kayser as being the basic element of the grotesque is no longer valid. Arnold Heidsieck in Das Groteske und das Absurde im modernen Drama²¹ clearly opposes Kayser's theory by maintaining that the grotesque has been identified and it no longer

²¹Arnold Heidsieck, Das Groteske und das Absurde im modernen Drama (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1969).

predicates its effect on the mysterious and alienated world which it evokes. It no longer functions to exorcise the demonic element in the world or to banish the destructive and disruptive elements within the mind itself, but rather, as it exists now, the grotesque forces a recognition upon the audience of the rupture and disharmony of social conditions and human relations in the real world.

The grotesque has come to specify certain conditions of reality, and the artist has been fired with a new purpose.

Eugène Ionesco in his Notes and Counter-Notes proclaims that

We need to be virtually bludgeoned into detachment from our daily lives, our habits and mental laziness, which conceal from us the strangeness of the world. Without a fresh virginity of mind, without a new and healthy awareness of existential reality, there can be no theatre and no art either; the real must be in a way dislocated, before it can be re-integrated...²²

The grotesque offers the means to achieve this, for it is the grotesque form that "dislocates flat everyday reality"²³ to present what Heidsieck calls

...solche Entstellung, die das Schreckliche und Lächerliche auf die Spitze, zum unerträglichen Widerspruch treibt; die produzierte Entstellung

²²Eugène Ionesco, Notes and Counter-Notes, trans. by Donald Watson (New York: Grove Press, 1964), p. 26.

²³Ibid.

des Menschen, die von Menschen verübte Unmenschlichkeit.²⁴

The tendency to arouse both amusement and fear is vital if the grotesque is to be at all effective. The recognition of what actually is, and what should be occurs during laughter, that "momentary anesthesia of the heart"²⁵ in which the intellect is able to synthesize the true value of what is being expressed. Laughter dissolves into a vague feeling of horror when the distortion is recognized as being a part of reality with no visible means of getting rid of the monstrosity. It is an almost simultaneous process and the grotesque achieves its power through the constant tension between the two. Too much of a shift in either direction reduces the effective intensity of the grotesque. In Jennings view, the grotesque

...can never lie entirely in the realm of the terrible, for it arises only when the terrible is treated playfully and rendered ludicrous. On the other hand, it can never be completely innocuous or playful, even if a fantastic or scurrilous form of play is meant. The grotesque presents the terrible in harmless guise, and its playfulness is constantly on the verge of collapsing and giving way to the concealed horror.²⁶

²⁴Heidsieck, p. 17. '...distortion which carries the terrifying and ludicrous to extremes, to the unbearable contradiction: the distortion caused by and produced by man, man's inhumanity to man.'

²⁵Henri Bergson, Laughter; an Essay on the Meaning of the Comic, trans. by C. Brereton (London: MacMillan, 1911), p. 5.

²⁶Jennings, p. 16.

This "concealed horror" is not related to an incomprehensible or sinister metaphysical force. It is traceable to a comprehensible and logical incongruity that exists in our world. It arouses a feeling of horror because in it we recognize what our world has in fact become.

"Grotesk" ist die Perversion der Vernunft, die in diesem einzelnen schreienden Missverhältnis der Realität, in jenem einzelnen unmenschlichen Akt zutage tritt. Unmittelbar und krass zeigt sich solche Perversion der Vernunft, die eben nur die abstrakte Struktur des Grotesken ist, in der ganz sichtbaren körperlichen Entstellung des Menschen.²⁷

The distorted forms of the grotesque, as already noted by Kayser, tend to have a quality about them that is characteristically human. "The mechanical object is alienated by being brought to life, the human being by being deprived of it."²⁸ Whatever unheard of or unnatural creatures are seen, they are always still recognizable. They consist of a montage of disparate elements behind which the norm is yet identifiable. No matter how ludicrous or ugly these forms may be, their intrusion does not mean that our

²⁷Heidsieck, p. 18. "Grotesque" is the perversion of reason, which manifests itself in this one single jarring incongruity of reality and that single inhuman action. Such perversion of reason, which is after all only the abstract structure of the grotesque, becomes evident with striking immediacy in the totally visible physical distortion of man.'

²⁸Kayser, p. 183.

world suddenly becomes irrational and fearsome, but rather their presence creates an incongruity that forces attention onto a significant relationship between the object and idea in question. Grotesque form is the concrete expression of an aspect of reality. Form and matter interrelate on the same level to produce not what Thomas Mann calls "das überwahre und überaus Wirkliche"²⁹ but what is real - a reality that has itself become distorted and corrupted.

Verzerrung, Missproportionen, Entstellung - wird in der grotesken Kunst zum Gestaltungsprinzip, weil die in ihr gestaltete Realität so beschaffen ist.³⁰

The great variety of elements common to the grotesque have prompted modern critics to correlate it with the fantastic and surreal, the absurd and irrational, the tragi-comic and the satirical. Most of these theories become implausible within the framework of Heidsieck's definition. A further examination of these different categories is warranted however because elements of these categories become part of the grotesque in Büchner's work. Büchner did not write in the modern age. He is of another time, and other traditions back him up. His use of the grotesque will become most meaningful when examined in the comprehensive framework of all these other concepts.

²⁹Thomas Mann, Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen (Berlin: Fischer, 1929), p. 601.

³⁰Heidsieck, p. 20.

For purposes of clarification then, each of the categories mentioned will be examined separately and in some detail in order to establish their relationship to the grotesque.

The Fantastic and Surreal

Kayser suggests that the grotesque world is the alienated world, unrecognizable because we can no longer arrange its components into a familiar scheme. Our world orientation collapses with the intrusion of unnatural and monstrous forms, nocturnal creatures, reptiles and vermin, which in most cases have no relation to life and reality itself. It is a form that may have been grotesque in a bygone era, but today, when our fears are no longer aroused by mythical demons, our emotional reactions are diminished because we are detached from this strange and alien world in which such weird creatures are allowed to exist.

It is necessary that a distortion stay in the "borderland between recognizable and unrecognizable form"³¹ if it is to remain meaningful. As soon as it steps beyond what is recognizable, so that the connection with our world no longer exists, it belongs in the realm of the fantastic and we see the advent of an element of wonder. The monstrosity has been

³¹Jennings, p. 9.

removed from the main stream of life and we are not threatened by it because it neither interferes with or undermines our perception of reality. We become distanced from it and are able to contemplate it with some sort of aloof amusement.

This type of attitude is generally taken towards the fairy tale which deals in the fantastic and uses the correspondingly weird creatures. The internal logic of a fairy tale remains constant, and once we believe in that world of wonders, nothing will destroy our faith in it. It is an alien world which is completely strange to us from the outset. We have never been there, nor known anyone who has. Everything that happens there has nothing to do with us, and we are safe to enjoy its unearthly imagery. The deformities may make us laugh, but they will not arouse fear because nothing ever stirred us to believe that these creatures, however horrible, could be present in our world. There is always an awareness that the grotesque object, however concrete and vital it appears to be, is not real but illusory and without menace. As long as the distortion is into something completely unfamiliar the grotesque in the modern sense does not come into being.

Grotesk ist immer nur das bekannte Fremde, die Verkehrung des Menschen, nicht ein Alogisch-Irreales, sondern ein logischer, in der Wirklichkeit anzutreffender Widerspruch.³²

³²Heidsieck, p. 31.

The surrealist also creates something in the nature of a fantastic world, and like the fantastic causes neither laughter nor fear but feelings that are more in the line of wonder or astonishment. Also based on disfiguring and distorting reality, the distorted form is not anchored in the real world. The true value of the surrealist image lies in its capacity to project a new realization which does not have to be referred for its meaning to an already existing object. The image does not represent, but rather expresses a new order of things; it creates a new kind of reality.

Instead of uniting form and matter in such a way that it points to a basic contradiction on the level of reality, surrealism directs its imagery upwards past what is real in order to "deepen the foundations of the real, to bring about an ever clearer and at the same time ever more passionate consciousness of the world perceived by the senses."³³ It attempts to present "interior reality and exterior reality as two elements in process of unification, of finally becoming one."³⁴ There is no attempt to juxtapose these two realities in order to focus the attention of the audience onto some inconsistency inherent in modern life. The surrealist world, as Kayser proposes is also a transformed, alien world. This is undeniable,

³³ André Breton, What is Surrealism?, trans. by David Gascoyne (London: Faber & Faber, 1936), p. 49.

³⁴ Breton, p. 50.

but because it uses motifs similar to the grotesque, it is not therefore a grotesque world. Kayser seems to be in error when he says that "the concept of the grotesque seems especially applicable to that movement of modern art which called itself Surrealism,"³⁵ because surrealism has created a land of fantasy for itself. Its images may shock the onlooker, overwhelm and exhilarate his senses, but rarely will it shock him because he finds in it a reflection of himself as a monstrous shadow that his own doings have caused him to become.

The Absurd and Irrational

The grotesque, says Kayser, is "a play with the absurd."³⁶ Its form tends towards senselessness and irrationality because it depicts our own world turned upside down; our standards, conventions, convictions upset and everything under our feet disintegrating. Kayser never really qualified his use of the term absurd and bases his definition on Goethe's lines

...wer heiter im Absurden spielt
Den wird auch wohl das Absurde ziemen.³⁷

So long as the grotesque is determined by inexplicable

³⁵Kayser, p. 168.

³⁶Kayser, p. 187.

³⁷"...whoever plays with the absurd will become absurd."

and sinister forces, "the creator of grotesques...must not and cannot suggest a meaning."³⁸ He merely executes their will and they are revealed through him as the irrational and formidable powers which are continually lurking about in the periphery of our mental and physical universe. The world which such forces penetrate is rendered meaningless because we cannot orientate ourselves in it. It is ruled by unreason, it is irrational, it is absurd. There is no differentiation made between the demonic, which connotes an external force, and the absurd, which is the intrinsic senselessness of the world. Kayser is not concerned with the inner meaning of grotesque forms, and it is therefore difficult for him to make any judgements concerning the grotesque in modern literature and drama where form and content are engaged in a direct relationship with each other.

The grotesque is not determined by any inexplicable forces but is determined by an already existing condition. The grotesque is based on a concrete principle, "die von Menschen verübte Unmenschlichkeit,"³⁹ and is therefore always within the bounds of the comprehensible. The grotesque is therefore not the absurd world as Kayser seems to believe,

³⁸Kayser, p. 186.

³⁹Heidsieck, p. 17.

The first part of the paper discusses the importance of the
theoretical framework in the study of the
relationship between the variables. The second part
presents the empirical results of the study. The third part
discusses the policy implications of the findings. The fourth part
concludes the paper.

The results of the study show that there is a significant
positive relationship between the variables. The findings
suggest that the theoretical framework is valid. The policy
implications of the findings are discussed. The study
concludes that the relationship between the variables is
significant and positive.

The study has several limitations. First, the sample size is
small. Second, the study is cross-sectional. Third, the
study does not control for other variables. Fourth, the
study is limited to the specific context.

it is the real world seen in a new light, from a new perspective, but nonetheless it is still the real world.

In the super-automated society of modern life, man is faced with an identity crisis, and in order to exist, he must give his self up and conform to the devices which he has created to serve him. He becomes reduced to a mere thing, and his transformation is not so much the result of his free will but definitely the result of his own doing. Ironically, he is the victim of a world that he has himself perverted.

This new man is a startling contradiction to his living and vital counterpart, and the fact that this can and has occurred produces a feeling of ridiculous helplessness. In the theatre we laugh to see this distorted shape of a man suddenly appearing in our normal world, but our laughter sticks in our throats when we recognize that his grotesque features only reflect an even more grotesque reality.

The grotesque uncovers reality and presents it in all its inglorious aspects, and by pointedly contrasting the world of our normal experience with the disorder that is really present in it, feelings of terror come to the fore. The fear, the despair and hopelessness that rise out of the realization of what our world has become may then lead to the absurd - "the absence of any profound reason for living, the insane character

of that daily agitation, and the uselessness of suffering."⁴⁰

Das Groteske ist also die literarische Figur, die die Zerissenheit und Diskontinuität gesellschaftlicher Zustände und menschlicher Relationen als Deformierungen ins Bild bringt. Der Zweck dieser deformierten Bilder besteht in der tragikomischen Wirkung, gemischt aus Schrecken und Gelächter. Das Groteske entdeckt den Sinn im Absurden.⁴¹

Because the modern grotesque is based on reality, its meaning is always comprehensible. In order for the grotesque effect to occur, we must recognize the distortion and realize that the grotesque actually exists in the world. Only after recognizing that disorder does exist in the world will feelings of its inherent senselessness and absurdity arise. However, the absurd here is not a descriptive term but a philosophic concept. The grotesque object or idea cannot in itself be irrational or absurd.

⁴⁰Albert Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus; and other essays, trans. by Justin O'Brian, Vintage Books (New York: Random, 1955), p. 5.

⁴¹Clemens Heselhaus, Deutsche Lyrik der Moderne von Nietzsche bis Yvan Goll (Düsseldorf: August Bagel Verlag, 1962), p. 289. 'The grotesque is therefore the literary device which expresses as deformities the disharmony and discontinuity of social conditions and human relations. The purpose of these deformed images lies in the tragicomic effect - a mixture of terror and laughter. The grotesque uncovers the meaning in the absurd.'

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

PHYSICS DEPARTMENT

PHYSICS 354

LECTURE 1

THEORY OF QUANTUM MECHANICS

LECTURER: [Name]

DATE: [Date]

TOPIC: [Topic]

OBJECTIVES: [Objectives]

INTRODUCTION: [Introduction]

1.1. [Section 1.1]

1.2. [Section 1.2]

1.3. [Section 1.3]

1.4. [Section 1.4]

1.5. [Section 1.5]

1.6. [Section 1.6]

1.7. [Section 1.7]

The Tragicomic and Satiric

There have been frequent attempts to fit the grotesque to the genre of tragicomedy because it appears to contain both comic and tragic elements. There is an essential difference between the two, however, and it lies not so much in their potential to express an overall sense of despair and hopelessness, but in their structure. Guthke describes it as follows;

The writer of grotesque plays, as Martin Esslin contends in the concluding chapter of his Theatre of the Absurd, is shocked and troubled by the loss of "ultimate certainties" and meaningful purposes in the world. So is the writer of tragicomedies. The difference is that the writer of grotesque plays attempts to shock his audience into an awareness of his human condition by the extreme distortion of reality...the author of tragicomedies is more conventionally "realistic" in his use of means to a similar end. He refuses to dispense with logic and the common mein of reality, with verisimilitude.⁴²

The effect of the grotesque, says Jan Kott, is even more cruel than tragedy. Tragedy is the "appraisal of human fate, a measure of the absolute,"⁴³ (i.e. God, Nature and History). In the grotesque, the absolute is nonexistent because it has been replaced by the absurdity of the human condition. It is

⁴²Karl S. Guthke, Modern Tragicomedy (New York: Random House, 1966), p. 75.

⁴³Kott, p. 132.

not "endowed with any ultimate reasons; it is stronger, and that is all."

The absurdity does not consist in the fact that man-made mechanisms are in certain conditions stronger, and even wiser, than he. The absurdity consists in the fact that they create a compulsory situation by forcing him to a game in which the probability of his total defeat constantly increases. The Christian view of the end of the world, with the Last Judgement and its segregation of the just and the unjust is pathetic. The end of the world caused by the big bomb is spectacular, but grotesque just the same.⁴⁴

Where the grotesque leads to hopelessness and probable defeat, tragicomedy still lends some degree of reassurance in spite of the fact that it too is constantly under threat of disintegration. Summing up Dürrenmatt's thoughts on tragicomedy, Guthke explains that

The disastrous chaos of the modern world remains chaotic, order remains lost. But it is countered by the spiritual form and order within the person who courageously faces its meaninglessness and bears it, much in the same way Sisyphus of the classical legend does...The comedy, the tragic comedy that results, is therefore curiously ambivalent and ambiguous: it is a comedy of despair with regard to the greater scheme of things; yet it is a tragedy of confidence with regard to man who courageously takes this despair upon himself.⁴⁵

⁴⁴Kott, p. 137.

⁴⁵Guthke, p. 134.

Laughter and fear are common elements in both the grotesque and in tragicomedy. Their functions differ, however, because tragedy and comedy are based on principles of order. Fear and laughter serve as a release mechanism with a restorative function. There is no release from the tension created by the grotesque because it offers no hope of something better, it merely points to fact and reality.

Satire is also based on the serious and the comic, and like the grotesque, also uses distortion as a means of achieving its effect. Satiric distortion however, is directed towards a definite end. It generally strives for social change and it has concrete and limited goals.

What drives the satirist to caricature an objectionable reality is nothing but the pain of being aware that this particular segment of reality...is wrong, perverse, evil, or lacking in essential substance, and this pain is obvious in the distorted image of the world he presents.⁴⁶

The satirist uses distortion by destroying an accepted norm and thereby drawing attention to its obvious flaws. His meaning always relates back to reality, not as it is, but as it should be. His stand is firm and he has an unshakeable view of norm and ideal. The grotesque however, is not concerned with the ideal. It too relates its distortions

⁴⁶Guthke, p. 70.

back to reality, but not as a contrast to what things should be. It presents its distortions as being the norm - reality that has itself been distorted.

There is hope in the distorted world of satire because all is seen "within the framework of a world that is intact."⁴⁷ The grotesque world however is not so comforting. It has no hope to offer because the grotesque is the reality. Laughter at its ludicrousness does not offer a release of tension as it does in satire, it only serves to compound our feelings of rising terror in view of the human condition and its apparent lack of meaning in the greater scheme of things.

Summary and Conclusion

The creations of the modern grotesque are not, as Kayser concludes, "the most obvious and pronounced contradictions of any kind of rationalism and any systematic use of thought."⁴⁸ The idea that grotesque distortions are a kind of rebellion against systematic thought is contradictory to his earlier statement that "the grotesque consists in an unimpassioned view of life on earth as an empty, meaningless puppet play or a

⁴⁷Guthke, p. 72.

⁴⁸Kayser, p. 188.

caricatural marionette theatre."⁴⁹ If the latter is indeed the view of life the artist must have in order to create the grotesque, then his creations must be directed towards its expression.

From a superficial point of view grotesque distortion may appear as being irrational or absurd, but the content or the idea behind the surface reality is always rational. Heidsieck emphasizes that the grotesque is always recognizable. It does not predicate its effect on a mysterious or alienated world, but is inevitably related to life. The grotesque dislocates our everyday reality; it forces us to see our world from a new perspective. It brings about the realization that the distorted and disharmonious creations of the grotesque reflect a condition of life.

Grotesque material seems to thrive in the modern drama. The predominant opinion is that it "arises from a pessimistic, fatalistic, or despairing frame of mind, that it expresses the disharmony and limitation of life and the suffering of its creator."⁵⁰ Despair and pessimism do not necessarily demand the existence of the grotesque because they can, and do appear in work that is completely devoid of grotesque elements. This despair and pessimism may appear to envelop the work in tragic

⁴⁹Kayser, p. 186.

⁵⁰Jennings, p. 22.

overtones, but contained within the grotesque, the development of tragedy or pathos is inhibited by the "realization that life is, after all, a foolish and ludicrous spectacle, and that man, in his futile insignificance and contemptible helplessness, can make no claim to tragedy."⁵¹ It is the author harbouring an optimistic viewpoint who tends to drift towards satiric distortions. But these too will lead to the grotesque when despair overcomes his intent and pulls his distortions towards more and more violent extremes until they give way to a "deformation of the face of life in such a way as to express immediately the terror and comedy of existence."⁵²

The grotesque is indeed more cruel than tragedy for it offers no solutions and little hope. It reveals the inescapable absurdity of the human condition from which neither laughter nor fear, the immediate and powerful combined effect of the grotesque, will release us.

⁵¹Jennings, p. 25.

⁵²Ibid.

CHAPTER II

FORM OF THE GROTESQUE

It is not necessary to refer entirely to the "reception" of the grotesque as Kayser has done, in an attempt to understand its function, for underlying the effect of the grotesque and all the negative aspects of existence it brings into play, are a number of specific devices which give rise to it. If these devices are given detailed consideration we may arrive at a fuller and more complete understanding, and all the subtle and less obvious forms of the grotesque will be brought to the surface.

Since we are here dealing with literature, and more specifically, the drama, there are two different levels on which a grotesque effect may be created. It may appear as part of a literary style where a theme or an idea is somehow distorted or rendered incongruous, or it may appear in the form of a distorted object - most likely a real person that has been removed from a purely conceptual realm into physical reality. The two levels are not mutually exclusive but are constantly interacting to expand the scope of meaning that is evoked by the immediate and powerful effect of the grotesque.

Distortion, upon which the effect of the grotesque is founded, is a negative term. It implies that a change

has taken place, and the result is usually into something less desirable. The term implies varying degrees of disintegration, and there is a progression from the normal to the abnormal, from the harmonious to the disharmonious, the meaningful to the meaningless. Distortion may occur in the narrative structure of the play and be revealed in the ideas, or in the outright physical distortion of real objects once the play becomes theatre - "das Verzerren kann als reales, kann als stilistisches gemeint sein."¹ The object is usually a figure that can be imagined in terms of the human form, but is often lacking aspects of real humanity. The standard form that undergoes this change is the human body. It tends to present a drastic departure from the norm but it always remains recognizable. The distortion can never be so great that it obliterates all traces of the human form because it would become some sort of a fantastic creature no longer related to life and reality.

The distortion of a particular situation may also lead to the grotesque. It is effected through the violation of our norms of existence, and here also, "the distortion must not proceed to the point of pure senselessness, but must result in the creation of an entirely new ordering principle

¹ Heidsieck, p. 16.

an anti-norm."² This "anti-norm" that Jennings speaks of represents the norm, the factual perversion of reality.

An irregularity on nature's part, however ugly or distorted it may be, can never be termed grotesque. It is accepted as being a natural although not normal condition. It is not a condition that has been inflicted upon nature by man and therefore there is nothing to shake our innermost orientation to reality. There is no visible contradiction that will somehow relate the distortion to life and the simultaneous occurrence of laughter and fear is notably absent.

Incongruity

An incongruity results when a distorted effect is produced. The incongruity is the incompatibility of the new form with what is known, familiar and accepted as being the norm. It may take the form of things disproportionate to ourselves, or lie in a disparity between an expectation and an actual event. It may be the juxtaposition of disconnected ideas or an idea and an object, whenever "the false is portrayed as the true, whenever an object is in itself or in its

² Jennings, p. 18.

surroundings incongruous,...also when the real and the ideal are confused or are treated simultaneously."³ Whatever the case, the techniques of distortion and juxtaposition that produce the incongruity cannot be used at random if a grotesque effect is to be the result. A combination of fearsome and ludicrous qualities must always be present, not one as a result of the other, but both together - a simultaneous occurrence. The distortion must be of a specific kind, "von einer Art, die den Betrachter entsetzt und zugleich lachen macht, die grauenvoll und lächerlich in eins ist."⁴

The laughable, says Bergson, consists of an incongruity - grace and awkwardness, elasticity and rigidity, adaptability and mechanical behaviour, on either a physical or a spiritual level. When human beings, or something that expresses humanity tends towards inelasticity, machinelike characteristics are assumed, and when the mechanical takes the place of human life where flexibility should exist, an incongruous effect is produced, and laughter results.

The incongruity, Bergson explains, is ultimately based on the traditional dualism, the antagonism between spirit and matter, soul and body. The struggle of spirit and matter, of

³ Lily Bess Campbell, The grotesque in the Poetry of Robert Browning (Folcroft, Pa.: Folcroft Press, 1907), p. 13-14.

⁴ Heidsieck, p. 17.

soul and body, grace and rigidity represent man's attempt to free himself so that he can transcend the limitations of life. It presupposes an ideal, and if our laughter is aroused by man's hopelessly comic struggle, it has a positive effect, for laughter is a "corrective" and will therefore see to it that order is eventually restored.

An incongruity that produces a grotesque effect is also inherently laughable. But laughter does not free us because in the grotesque there is no hope of something better, there is only reality and that is all. When we see machinelike characteristics encrusted on man, we may laugh because the image appeared either unexpectedly or suddenly, but our laughter is instantly mixed with fear when we realize that this thing is what we are, and there is no possibility of escaping the fact.

Dass mit dem Grauen zugleich das Lachen unheimlich gesteigert wird, liegt an der Unvereinbarkeit der beiden Vorstellungen: der lebendige Mensch, der ein Selbstzweck sein, um seiner selbst willen dasein soll, wird wie ein beliebiges Material verarbeitet, zum technischen Produkt entstellt.⁵

Incongruity that produces a grotesque effect produces

⁵Heidsieck, p. 17. 'The reason that together with horror, laughter is tremendously intensified, lies in the incompatibility of the two concepts, that the living human being, supposedly an end and entity to himself, is being processed like any matter; is distorted into a technical product.'

both laughter and terror. Because the grotesque reflects the real world, it is both ludicrous and horrible at the same time, for it appears in our midst as a "bloody joke", and its implications are unrelenting and unyielding facts of life.

Based on incongruity, the exaggeration of objects and ideas will also produce a distorted effect. By seizing upon specific qualities and blowing them up into outrageous proportions, the mechanism of exaggeration is able to create a distorted image that will appear equally as ridiculous and out of keeping with the norm as any other kind of distortion. Caricature is often the result of willful exaggeration but although by itself it does not give rise to a grotesque effect, in combination with other elements it may do so. Because in Büchner's work caricature is effectively used as a means of arousing the grotesque, the technique will need further examination.

Caricature

Caricature makes a subject ludicrous because it breaks down the unity of his appearance. By emphasizing a particular feature out of all normal proportion, the relationship of all the parts which normally make up the individual subject, is destroyed. An imbalance is thus created, and the reduction of some features and the exaggeration of others produces a

ridiculous and incongruous object.

A caricature is an unnatural representation of a human life; it is a human being that has been deprived of some or all of his human vitality. His life is characterized by rigidity of thought and expression and there is no longer an active concern for the mutability of existence - all has become static. Caricatures become mechanized and are prone to automatic repetition of fixed ideas and gestures. Their inflexibility excites our laughter because "at the root of the comic there is a sort of rigidity which compels its victims to keep strictly to one path, to follow it straight along, to shut their ears and refuse to listen."⁶

There is a tendency to develop the inhuman qualities of caricatures even more by distorting their human features into shapes of animals, plants, machines or other inanimate objects. Here too, it is important that a recognizable human quality remain apparent in the distorted object. Bergson, in the following passage emphasizes the necessity of this if a comic effect is to be maintained.

...we shall probably find that it is generally comic in proportion to the clearness, as well as the subtleness, with which it enables us to see a man as a jointed puppet. The suggestion must be a clear one, for inside the person we must distinctly perceive, as though through a

⁶ Bergson, p. 180.

glass, a set-up mechanism. But the suggestion must also be a subtle one, for the general appearance of the person, whose every limb has been made rigid as a machine, must continue to give us the impression of a living being. The more exactly these two images, that of a person and that of a machine, fit into each other, the more striking is the comic effect, and the more consummate the art of the draughtsman. The originality of a comic artist is thus expressed in the special kind of life he imparts to a mere puppet.⁷

The puppet motif has always lent itself well to the creation of the grotesque because it is a vivid representation of the mechanical taking the place of human life. Where live forms and mechanical forms are thus related, laughter and terror, the necessary conditions of the grotesque may arise. But the mechanization of life or the distortion of the human form does not necessarily create the grotesque, and it is not synonymous with these concepts.

Because caricature is generally employed to disparage some aspect of life, it is a device used by the satirist who strives for social change. Through the exaggeration and distortion of human failings, he is able to produce a burlesque or ridiculous effect. He relies on surprise and shock to make his point, for he desires to convince without allowing his audience time for reflection. The technique of caricature however, need not be confined to satire and its

⁷ Bergson, p. 80.

limited goals, for exaggeration and distortion of human features can be applied on a more general scale where it can parody the condition of man.

The question as to whether or not caricature is able to evoke the grotesque has caused much scholarly speculation. There are those who maintain that caricature is inherently grotesque because it portrays spiritual rigidity and static behaviour patterns, and others, Wolfgang Martens for example, who disagree with this, maintaining that caricature limits its scope, is humorous and didactic, and therefore does not shake our perception of reality in any way. Neither does it bring into being all the negative aspects of existence which the grotesque arouses.

Wenn satirische Karikatur...mit ihren Mitteln stets auf bestimmte und änderbare Eigenschaften und Verhältnisse abzielt, so charakterisiert sich Groteskes gerade daran, dass es, ohne bestimmte Tendenz, im Bereich des Komischen einen beängstigenden, unveränderbaren negativen Bestandteil des Seins selbst zu spiegeln vermag.⁸

Where caricature is not intended to disparage some aspect of life, we see in it a human being that has been reduced to

⁸Wolfgang Martens, "Zur Karikatur in der Dichtung Büchners (Woyzecks Hauptmann)," Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift, VIII (1958), p. 70. 'While satiric caricature...which always aims with its means at specific and changeable characteristics and circumstances, the grotesque is characterized by the very fact that without any specific tendency it is able to reflect in the realm of the comic a disquieting, unchangeable negative element in existence itself.'

the status of a mechanical thing. The spiritual life of this part organic and part mechanical creature has been negated, and his symbolic significance points to a certain view of life which accentuates the meaninglessness and seeming irrationality of human existence. The particular quality within caricature that allows it to stimulate thoughts in this direction is significant because in combination with other elements, a grotesque effect can be attained.

Keineswegs genügt es zur Entstellung des Grotesken, wenn der Autor reduzierte, mehr oder weniger entpersönlichte Figuren verwendet. ...Erst dann, wenn "Organisch-Beseeltes" neben "Mechanisch-Seelenloses" tritt, wenn beide Bereiche einander durchdringen, sodass ein neuer Ausdruck entsteht, ... tritt die groteske Wirkung ein.⁹

A juxtaposition of two incompatible elements that is effected either intrinsically or extrinsically, is required. In the case where caricature is involved, the juxtaposition is usually of something organic with something inorganic, found within the caricature itself, or it may present itself in a clash between two contrasting levels of reality. Whenever the two mutually repellent spheres are brought together, they

⁹ Hans Günther, Das Groteske bei N.V. Gogol'; Formen und Funktionen (München: Verlag Otto Sagner, 1968), p. 262, quoting Gerhard Mensching, "Das Groteske im modernen Drama" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Bonn, 1961), p. 162. 'By no means is it sufficient for the distortion of the grotesque if the author uses reduced, more or less depersonalized figures....The grotesque effect is achieved only when the "organically animated" is juxtaposed with the "mechanically inanimate", when both realms permeate each other so that a new expression emerges.'

penetrate our minds and reveal to us a new and more profound incongruity in which lies the grotesque.

Juxtaposition

Unrelated to caricature, the juxtaposition or the coexistence of two contradictory objects or ideas can also bring about a grotesque effect if the resulting incongruity lies within the bounds of reality. An incongruous image may result when a logical train of thought or a logical action is suddenly changed into something that appears to be completely irrational. A character in the drama may be moving along quite rationally until at some point his action suddenly ceases to make sense. Although the character is not aware of this, his action at this point can no longer be explained in terms of a rational cause and effect relationship. Whether it is physical or mental, there is an inexplicable disruption in the logical progression. The audience is forced to rearrange the unrelated concepts in a new pattern so as to maintain its orientation to the reality created within the work.

The juxtaposition does not disorient the viewer to the point where he becomes alienated from the world because the world seems suddenly out of joint and unfamiliar. The unexpected break in logic does not instantly transform what was once trusted and familiar into what is alien and uncanny,

as Kayser maintains. The modern drama is not concerned with any outside forces that could possibly intrude into the real world. Any incongruity that penetrates our perception of reality thus causing a distorted effect, will always be related back to reality. There is a psychological tendency in modern audiences to seek a relationship between the two incompatible ideas or actions presented, and it is the sudden disruption that directs their attention to some significant connection between the two. Although the process itself may be considered as being anti-rational because it destroys the norm or the logical flow of ideas, the resulting incongruity however, is not therefore irrational. The juxtaposition of grossly unrelated concepts forces the observer to make an association foreign to the standards with which he has been familiarized, but the incongruity is still related to life and is therefore always "ein logischer, in der Wirklichkeit anzutreffender Widerspruch."¹⁰

Summary and Conclusion

The grotesque in the modern drama is founded upon a complex network of structural devices, all of which bring about a specific effect - a combination of laughter and fear. Distortion is the basic device used to produce the grotesque effect. It

¹⁰Heidsieck, p. 31.

can be brought about by the physical deformation of an object, or by creating an incongruity in theme or idea. The human form provides the most common object of grotesque distortion. It must always remain in some way recognizable in order that a grotesque effect occur, for we must be able to relate the new form to something already known - we must relate the distortion back to life and reality.

A distorted form or idea, brought about by exaggeration or by the illogical or unexpected juxtaposition of various contradictory elements produces an incongruity which is laughable. However, it is laughable only as long as the distortion remains distant and we do not recognize its actual existence in our world. Caricatures are laughable, for their mechanical thoughts and actions involve them in absurd or incongruous situations. Yet caricatures in themselves are not grotesque. They become grotesque when seen to coexist with incompatible elements. When forms that are vital and alive are juxtaposed with forms of a mechanical nature, an incongruity is created that may then lead to the grotesque.

The apparent meaninglessness and irrationality which a grotesque image brings into play is not created externally to it through some unknown power, but it comes from a rational source that lies well within our grasp because our world has created the grotesque and we have helped to make

it so. On the surface, the unnatural distortion of man may appear irrational because it is foreign and unfamiliar. Deeper reflection however will reveal that what seems irrational is in fact rational because the distortion reflects reality.

Die groteske Kunst in ihrer widersprüchlichen Wirking von Lachen und Grauen sucht die Verdrängung des produzierten Grauens und die Illusionen über seine wahre Beschaffenheit aufzuheben. Seine menschlichen Urheber sollen kenntlich und lächerlich gemacht werden. Und es ist das Lachen, diese "zeitweilige Anästhesie des Herzens," die Distanz und Erkennen schafft.¹¹

The distorted world that is created by the grotesque is always identified with the external world "whose senselessness, insubstantiality and ludicrous show of importance it mimics."¹² Its images are permeated with the distinct flavour of reality and they reflect the physical and spiritual disharmony of modern life.

¹¹Heidsieck, p. 36. 'Grotesque art in its contradictory effect of laughter and horror aims at cancelling the submersion of the produced terror and the illusion of its true nature. Its human originators are meant to be made recognizable and ludicrous, and it is laughter, this "momentary anesthesia of the heart" which creates distance and recognition.'

¹²Jennings, p. 42.

CHAPTER III

ELEMENTS OF THE GROTESQUE IN "WOYZECK"

In the modern world man is ruled by a rationalistic philosophy that places all emphasis on empirical truth. Feeling and reason are separated, and man is forced to cope with the world on coldly objective terms. The resulting dichotomy between subjective and objective reality, between man and nature leaves him spiritually uprooted and uncertain as to his significance in the greater scheme of things. Reassurance in the existence of a universal order is lost, and with no ideal to strive for, man's life has a dubious value. Life without meaning reduces man to a mere function, and in his daily activities he sees himself as a thing, an object. Where the sensitivity of the artist is profoundly influenced by the disjointed and disharmonious aspects of life, artistic expression is predominantly pessimistic. The result is

...a disjunction of sensibility and belief of feeling and reason in the artist, and he...found it necessary to qualify his emotive responses to life by presenting the antithesis of these responses in the same aesthetic structure. The result was irony...irony gave way to comic

incongruity and the grotesque.¹

A dramatic work that has a general predisposition towards a negative view of life such as Büchner's, gains profound impact by the use of grotesque elements. Whether these be employed intentionally or not is not relevant to this study; what matters is whether or not they are present in the work, and if so, how they are employed.

The picture of life which Büchner presents is negative, often pessimistic and at times even nihilistic. Büchner writes:

I find in human nature a terrifying sameness, in the human condition an inexorable force, granted to all and to none. The individual mere froth on the wave, greatness sheer chance, the mastery of genius a marionette play, a ridiculous struggle against brazen law; to recognize this law our supreme achievement, to control it impossible.²

The kind of themes that arise out of such a world view tend towards a concern with the pitiable ludicrousness of the human condition, and life is pictured as a comic spectacle, a puppet show.

¹Ralph A. Ciancio, "The Grotesque in Modern American Fiction: An Existential Theory" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1964), pp. 175-176.

²Werke, p. 162. 'Ich finde in der Menschennatur eine entsetzliche Gleichheit, in den menschlichen Verhältnissen eine unabwendbare Gewalt, allen und keinem verliehen. Der einzelne nur Schaum auf der Welle, die Grösse ein blosser Zufall, die Herrschaft des Genies ein Puppenspiel, ein lächerliches Ringen gegen ein ehernes Gesetz, es zu erkennen das Höchste, es zu beherrschen unmöglich.'

Es unterliegt keinem Zweifel, dass über der Lebensstimmung der Büchnerschen Dramatik jenes bitter-höhnische Lachen oder trüb-heitere Lächeln schwebt, das die Welt als trostlos-komisches Spektakel begreift, als Marionettenbühne, als Narrenkomödie, als Maskerade, als Schaubudenplatz.³

In a world that is senseless and meaningless, man is reduced to a mechanistic entity, a marionette on a string, manipulated, but without apparent reason or rationale. He lives, he performs his daily activities only because he must, and the word "must", says Büchner, "is one of the curses pronounced at the baptism of men."⁴

It is man then alone on the frightful stage of a marionette theatre. He acts, searching for something that may give him meaning, but each discovery only disintegrates in his hands, all action is finally in vain. He is helpless, unable to act of his own will, performing because he must, because he exists. In a letter to his family Büchner writes;

³Rudolf Majut, Lebensbühne und Marionette, Germanische Studien, Heft 100 (Berlin: Verlag Ebering, 1931), p. 59. 'There can be no doubt that over the mood of Büchner's dramatic art hovers that bitter, cynical laughter or sad, serene smile which understands the world as a cheerlessly comic spectacle, as a marionette show, a comedy of fools, a masquerade, a side-show.'

⁴Werke, p. 162. 'Das Muss ist eins von den Verdammungsworten, womit der Mensch getauft worden.'

It is said I am a ridiculer. True, I laugh a great deal; but my laughter is not how a human being is, but rather the fact that he is a human being; about which he can do nothing; and at the same time I laugh at myself because I must share his fate.⁵

The terrifying state to which man has been brought is seen as the end result of rational thought. It therefore seems perfectly reasonable that the rational world, the apparent stability of the structures of society, even of modern civilization, suffers from man's follies, and we become aware that the direct antithesis is true: that man, life, the world as we know it, is precariously unstable, absurdly irrational, indeed, grotesque.

Woyzeck and Danton's Death reflect the terrible and comic aspects of man's insignificant struggle in the world. Danton suffers spiritually and Woyzeck must endure physical torment as well. Their words and actions show that the value and purpose of life is indeed doubtful, yet they painfully endure. Danton, by choice, is inactive because he has come to the realization that action is ultimately meaningless and futile. His individual activities, his search for meaning, lead only

⁵Werke, p. 164. 'Man nennt mich einen Spötter. Es ist wahr, ich lache oft; aber ich lache nicht darüber, wie jemand ein Mensch, sondern nur darüber, dass er ein Mensch ist, wofür er ohnehin nichts kann, und ich lache dabei über mich selbst, der ich sein Schicksal teile.'

to destruction. In Leonce and Lena life becomes a comic spectacle. Beneath its harmless exterior, wherever the harshness of Büchner's pessimism overpowers the fantasy, we are occasionally able to glimpse the frightful aspects of the real world, and once again we see puppets, ridiculous and terrifying, but undeniably responsible for their world.

The physical disunion in the world, and the schism between man and nature becomes such an integral part of Büchner's artistic creation that both the form and content are affected. The distorted imagery revealed in his work is the conscious reflection of the real world. "I regard my play as an historical painting, which must be like its original...,⁶ says Büchner of Danton's Death. In Woyzeck, where a disjointed world view is continually reinforced by the disjointed structure of the play, form and content fuse into a picture that shows things as they really are, for the pain and suffering, the endured agony, are not afflictions rained down by a fearsome god to test his creation, but the consequence of a bad joke, played on man by man himself.

Büchner's dramas are characterized by short, concise scenes which tend to be complete in themselves and are not

⁶Werke, p. 177. 'Ich betrachte mein Drama wie ein geschichtliches Gemälde, das seinem Original gleichen muss....'

necessarily used to further a specific plot line. It is not essential that the scenes contribute to a linear progression, to the rising action and finally to the climax, but rather, each scene is self-contained. The texture of progression is disjointed and choppy. Büchner's use of grotesque elements is significant in this kind of structure because the repeated juxtaposition of opposing objects or ideas within the scenes, or between one scene and another causes each scene to accentuate and underscore the essential idea of the work itself. It becomes clear that this repeated interruption in the flow of action, this disharmony of progression, is parallel to the philosophy contained within the works; the disharmony of social conditions, of life itself. Further, we see the parallel between the self-containment of each scene and the exile of each man, alone and unable to communicate with the rest of humanity. Wherever the grotesque effect occurs, we experience the impact of disruption in content and in structure. Rather than emphasize situation, the scenes then expose ideas which coincide with and emphasize the general theme expressed in the plays. This results in a cumulative effect in which each scene functions to intensify the effect of the final result.

Woyzeck is probably most exemplary in showing Büchner's use of grotesque elements. Because the play was left incomplete however, a final arrangement of scenes was never specified so

that a logical sequence is partly determined by the progression of the story in time. Apart from that, a certain freedom of choice is left. I do not intend to discuss the optimal arrangement here,⁷ because it does not affect the texture of the play essentially. Woyzeck was written without concern for a linear plot development, and the short scenes, unfolding in a staccato-like fashion serve rather to construct a picture that reflects Woyzeck's life. No matter how the sequence of scenes is arranged then, the essential texture remains unaltered. Ultimately, the choice of sequence may relatively strengthen or weaken the total impact, but it cannot change it.

Structure

The selection of incidents and their sequence within the

⁷The first version of Woyzeck was published in 1879 by Karl Emil Franzos. The most widely used edition however has been that of Fritz Bergemann. It first appeared in 1922, and most other versions following this have to a large degree maintained his original scene arrangement. More recently, Werner R. Lehmann has published his own version, and the scene arrangement varies from the latter. All references to Woyzeck and other plays in this thesis have been taken from the following translation by Mueller, and except for minor variations within the text itself, the arrangement of scenes follows Bergemann precisely. All quotations will be indicated by the title of the play and the page reference.

Georg Büchner, Complete Plays and Prose, trans. by Carl Richard Mueller, Mermaid Dramabook (New York: Hill and Wang, 1963).

play are most effective where they show a clash, or a confrontation between the real and the unreal, between a life force and a mechanical one. Whenever this occurs, and it occurs in any arrangement, some measure of distortion arises because the scenes which follow one another do not complete a logical thought, or follow one another in an expected pattern. The idea contained within one scene juxtaposed with its opposite, appears at first to be ludicrous. The two seemingly contradictory ideas however, force the audience to rearrange the unrelated concepts in a new pattern, and we review the events, question our perception of the situation, and very possibly become aware of another, and often radically different aspect of reality.

Aside from the specific grotesque elements within characters, and the arrangement of characters into situations which may produce a grotesque effect, the juxtaposition of scenes creates the most powerful effect within Büchner's play construction. The entire work has a continual jarring effect; it is constructed of short, disconnected scenes, and it takes place on two levels of reality constantly interrelating to produce a visible incongruity on both physical and mental levels.

In Woyzeck, the incongruities lie in the incompatibility between what is real and unreal. Woyzeck and Marie are real, that is, recognizable as consistent, fully fleshed out characters. They react to each other as flesh and blood, and manifested in

them are all the emotions distinctly human. Marie is sensual, she loves her son, she responds to her conscience. Woyzeck loves Marie, cares for her and the child. When Woyzeck accuses her of being unfaithful she cries "Am I human or not?", and he pathetically replies; "I'm sorry Marie. - Look at the boy asleep. Lift his arm, the chair's hurting him. Look at the shiny drops on his forehead." (Woyzeck, p. 116)

In contrast to this scene (Scene vi, p. 116), we see Woyzeck earning his wages at the Doctor's, (Scene vii, p. 117). The Doctor however is not real, and in relation to him, Woyzeck is suddenly deprived of his humanity and reduced to something worse than an experimental animal. The whole scene appears to be absurd, because the actions of the pseudo-scientist are completely irrational. Even though the Doctor's actions may be consistent with the "reality" of scientific behaviour within which he exists, the logic of his experiments seem grossly out of proportion when the contrasting presence of Woyzeck is felt. The disparity created in our minds by the juxtaposition of this scene, showing Woyzeck physically transposed into an utterly absurd situation, and the former scene which exposed his human sensitivities, makes us want to explode with laughter. The inconsistency between his significance as a human being seen in relation to Marie and then in relation to the Doctor seems ridiculous and unreal.

Behind this surface reality however, we are faced with the realization that some essential truth has been demonstrated. As long as we are ruled by our feelings and instincts, and live by and for them alone, we cannot endure in this world. Only if we ourselves adopt rigid attitudes and mechanical behaviour patterns can we survive. Consequently the Doctor will survive, but Woyzeck will not. The moment we recognize this fact, we can no longer laugh at the absurd predicament in which Woyzeck finds himself. Our laughter subsides and is replaced by a vague feeling of terror; we fear for ourselves and our own significance in this grotesque world.

Woyzeck progresses from the scene with the Doctor (Scene vii, p. 117) to his encounter in the street with both the Doctor and the Captain (Scene ix, p. 119). The two scenes are very similar as they both serve to represent the irrationality of the machanized human beings, their inhuman relationship to Woyzeck and their grotesque significance to life and reality.

In the first scene we witness Woyzeck being physically manipulated by the Doctor and later, both the Doctor and the Captain torment him emotionally. For the Captain, Woyzeck's appearance is opportune because the Doctor has just aroused his fear, and to dispel it, he immediately begins to belabour Woyzeck with his usual superficial preoccupations - morality, virtue, and now infidelity. The Doctor stands by and "objectively"

comments on Woyzeck's increasing agitation.

If the two scenes existed back to back, their progression would allow for an almost relaxed acceptance of the theme being realized because we would be permitted the comfort of laughing at the absurdities inherent in the two scenes. Büchner, however, does not allow us this moment of relaxation and he briefly flashes an image that destroys our momentary ease and once again raises the intensity of expression.

The sudden shift has a strong jarring effect because we are doubly exposed - from the mechanical aspects revealed through the Doctor scene, to the raw sensuality of the Marie Drum Major scene (Scene viii, p. 119), and right back again to the mechanistic world of the caricatures. The short scene wrenches us away from the ludicrous words and actions of the caricatures. On one level it shocks us into recognizing our self-imposed but needless suffering and the meaninglessness of human endeavours - all of which is reflected in Woyzeck's senseless effort to provide for a woman who is unfaithful to him.

On another level, the senselessness of Woyzeck's action is even more emphasized when we realize that Marie, like Woyzeck, is also motivated by her natural impulses. Both characters do therefore not have a choice of action, but are in a sense manipulated, and like puppets must act out the

demands of these impulses and cause each other suffering. Woyzeck's efforts, which now seem to be pitted against a more universal force, become even more ludicrous as the intensity of his suffering is shown in this larger perspective. Our own emotions, induced by our empathy for Woyzeck force a recognition of ourselves, for the powerfully effective scene provides the sudden shift, and the produced juxtaposition reveals to us the reality of life and all its implications.

In order to produce a grotesque effect, it is not always necessary that the confrontation, the juxtaposition of scenes move from the physical, real world to an inherently mechanistic one, that is, from the organic to the inorganic. The clash between scenes can also be produced by juxtaposing the distorted world of Woyzeck's inner vision, the organic world gone mad, with the inorganic, the world inhabited by the caricatures.

Woyzeck's disorientation, his hallucinations are symptoms of disorder within the man. His irrational actions have an organic texture because Woyzeck is essentially human, and his disorientation is in part caused by his failure to cope in a reasoning manner with his own instincts, and in part by his inability to withstand his mechanical environment.

Because Woyzeck is unable to curb his natural impulses, his frustrations increase as his problems in the normal world become more complicated. He cannot cope, and gradually rejects the growing disorder within the external world and creates a

new, "depersonalized" world of visions for himself. He replaces the "norm" with an "anti-norm", and the juxtaposition of both within him has the effect of intensifying the agony which he suffers as a result of what he is, a human being characterized by basic instincts.

Woyzeck confides his visions to Andres (Scene xiv, p. 127) and expresses his distorted and irrational view of the world.

Woyzeck: Andres! There's something outside.
In the ground. They're always pointing
to it. Don't you hear them now,
listen, now, knocking on the walls?
Somebody must have seen me out the
window. Don't stop. Stab! Stab
the ——
(Woyzeck, p. 127)

And immediately following this, Woyzeck is again confronting the mechanical world in which he is manipulated, humiliated and turned into an animal by the Doctor (Scene xv, p. 127) who sees him only as a scientific anomaly, a human donkey.

The two extremes, thus brought together, Woyzeck in his world of illusions, organic but irrational, and Woyzeck in the mechanical world, produces an incongruity that occurs on two levels. First within Woyzeck himself, and then Woyzeck in confrontation with the mechanism of society. The juxtaposition creates a profound impact which is once again both ludicrous and terrifying.

We laugh at the ridiculous nonsense that the Doctor firmly believes in, but we stop laughing when we realize that the

power which he has over Woyzeck is due precisely to the fact that he lacks Woyzeck's feelings, his sensitivities and his instincts. The Doctor's fixed ideas cannot torment his own soul, they cannot drive him to the suffering which Woyzeck endures.

The detached, "scientific" world, exemplified by the Doctor, and the organized, mechanized world of the military, exemplified by the Captain, offer no choices to its victims. This world, which has no respect or sympathy for human creation is indeed grotesque. Woyzeck's disorientation and his hallucinations parallel the schism between man and nature. The lack of a spiritual hold on life loosens man's hold on reality, and without a firm footing in this world, man can be pushed about and manipulated with cold objectivity until he breaks under the strain and seeks possible comfort in his own inner world.

Where there is no obvious deformation of characters or situations, and both occur on one level of reality, the grotesque is brought about by juxtaposing ideas, in which case the subject matter brings forth contradictory elements.

In Woyzeck, this juxtaposition of ideas is presented in the scenes showing Woyzeck rummaging through his belongings and the following scene in which the Grandmother tells her fairy tale to the little children. (Scenes xxii, xxiii,

p. 132-134). We first see Woyzeck sorting out material objects which he has valued enough to keep. The selection is obvious, for they all are a part of his life, and each object confirms his existence.

When juxtaposed with the following scene, and Woyzeck's life, identified through his possessions, is considered in light of the Grandmother's story, which emphasizes the ultimate futility of everything, an incongruity results which makes the soldier's life appear absolutely ludicrous. To think that his frantic activities and his constant efforts to give some meaning to his own existence are all to come to nothing is the absurd incongruity of the human condition. Material objects with which we identify our existence are in fact inconsequential and meaningless, just as meaningless as our world which is after all only "an upside-down pot". (Woyzeck, p. 133) The terrifying prospect that we are indeed alone, makes us want to laugh at Woyzeck's meaningless possessions and our own senseless universe.

The juxtaposition of ideas between scenes is much more evident in Danton's Death because the overall texture of the play is more static than in Woyzeck where the constant physical activities of the characters is rhythmically emphasized by the discontinuity of action and language. In order to create a like impact, Danton's Death depends more on the contrast between

ideas rather than actions.

An obvious example occurs in the contrast between the first two opening scenes. The setting is a drawing room. It exudes an atmosphere of refined indulgence, and the affected sentiments and sensual pleasures which are being enjoyed by some of the leaders of the Revolution create an air of cultured artificiality - a violent contradiction to the scene immediately following it. In the unrealistic and poetic speeches of this first scene, the sentiments and ideals are expressed by the leaders of the Revolution, the liberators of the people.

Camille: The Constitution must be a transparent veil that clings close to the body of the people. Through it we must see the pulsing of each vein, the flexing of every muscle, the quiver of every sinew. Her body can be beautiful or ugly, because it has the right to be exactly what it is; and we have no right to dress her as we see fit.
(Danton's Death, p. 5)

These poetic illusions are in profound contradiction to what the people really are. This opening scene is reminiscent of pre-revolutionary France, the days when the aristocrats filled the gambling casinos, dressed in the finery of the courts, oblivious to the tortured lives of the people in the streets. It was this great discrepancy which the leaders of the Revolution thought to end, and now we see them poetically proclaiming their ideals while living comfortable lives.

While Camille talks, outside his door the rabble, the people, act out their corrupt and vicious lives, causing each other suffering and pain. In contrast to the opening scene, the street scene, in which humanity's most outrageous vices are exposed, seems grossly exaggerated. In it, a blindly drunken Simon beats his wife, and in the presence of interested bystanders he uses the foulest language to loudly accuse his daughter of being a whore. It is a scene without the false poetry and deluded ideals of the preceding scene: the contrast is clearly evident.

Simon: (beating his Wife). You filthy pimp,
you haggard poisonous pill, you worm-
eaten apple of sin!

Wife: Oh, help me! Help me!

People: (come running). Get them apart, get
them apart!

Simon: No, leave me be, good Romans! I'll
batter her bones to bits! Oh, you holy
whore!

Wife: Holy whore! We'll see about that!

Simon: I'll tear the clothing off your wormy
body
And bake your naked carrion in the sun.

O bed of a whore, there's lechery in
every wrinkle of your body.

(Danton's Death, p. 6).

Juxtaposing the two concepts, in this case the ideal and the real, in two consecutive scenes, forces us to regard the

situation from another perspective entirely. The sudden contradiction between the ideal and the reality disrupts a certain continuity in our perception and the two situations become isolated in our minds. In contrast to the first, the real situation appears to be absurdly exaggerated and we are vaguely amused and startled by its vulgarity; at the same time we seek some significant relationship between the two.⁸

Due to the particular kind of structure employed by Büchner, scenes can be juxtaposed in such a way that their inherent content produces an incongruity which parallels the themes contained within his work - the disharmony of life and the incongruity of the human condition. Through the confrontation and juxtaposition of characters and caricatures, through the manipulation and degradation of human beings, the inhuman and mechanical aspects of life are exposed. By juxtaposing scenes containing opposing ideas, Büchner's

⁸ Further examples: 1) Danton's Death, Act I, scene v, p. 16-17. Julie's story of her youthful love juxtaposed with the story of the two dogs in the street and the appearance of the two whores. Again, the same contrast; the poetic ideal love opposing reality. The question raised: What use are ideals? They come to nothing because life is what it is - senseless, vulgar and inhuman. The juxtaposition is grotesque. 2) Danton's Death, Act II, scenes v, vi. Danton, tormented because of the bloody consequences of his action, humanely motivated, yet unreal in their idealistic conception. Juxtaposed with the vulgarity of the people who have no concept of what he was striving for. Their thoughts produce a grotesque effect in contrast to Danton's.

own philosophy is brought out, and we see life as a puppet play or a side show.

Character

Büchner had a strong disposition to disparage those aspects of life which caused unnecessary pain and suffering to man. Most often the disparagement was directed at man himself, because, as Büchner came to realize, the pain and suffering of man was most often inflicted by man. He recognized the shortcomings of the victims with deep sympathy. His scorn, however, was angrily directed at the unknown powers, the puppeteers, the manipulators, who permit, if not demand man's inhumanity to man.

In Woyzeck are found the mechanical fixed routine characters existing in an equally mechanical world, a world too reminiscent of our own to be laughed off as satire. And Woyzeck, a victim of the world in which he lives, like a puppet, is manipulated by the irrational forces around him. He survives only if he passively accepts the demands of these forces, if he allows the marionette strings to determine his actions. His own action, motivated by his human feelings, the murder of Marie, only succeed in destroying the one thing which recognized these feelings. In this final attempt to conform Woyzeck to the irrational world, the forces of this irrationality,

the manipulators, drive him to destroy his last hold on the rational world.

The distorted figures with which Woyzeck is forced to deal represent human beings that have embraced a social system. They have isolated their minds from any disruptive influence and become preachers of their own unyielding morality. Spiritual rigidity and static behaviour patterns characterize these reduced human beings, and their automatic repetition of fixed ideas commands our laughter and ridicule. In Woyzeck, the constant shift between real and unreal elements, between characters and caricatures, creates a radical alteration in the structure of reality within the play. The fact that Woyzeck is forced to function within the world of the caricatures indicates a connection between our world and a world that seems unreal and ludicrous.

Woyzeck, a flesh and blood character, is composed of qualities which emphasize the contrast between him and the caricatures. His human characteristics, in fact, are emphasized to the exclusion of an inherent reasoning mechanism which would impose a restraint on Woyzeck's instinctual feelings.

His emotions are selected and reduced to those most basic and instinctive. Thus compacted into the one man, they produce an effect that appears to highly exaggerate

Woyzeck's animal drives. As a result, whenever an external event occurs which affects these emotions, his reactions are explosive and he is often motivated to act without apparent logic or rationale.

The exaggerated emotions within Woyzeck can provide a particular situation with contrasting and often conflicting elements. Tormented by his suffering, yet unable to comprehend the reasons for it, Woyzeck is constantly switching back and forth between apparently rational, (at least logical) and irrational thought and action. There is often a loss of continuity in his mental activity, and his actions parallel this senseless agitation.

In order to illustrate the inhumanity of man to man, the manipulation and degradation, the reality of Woyzeck is confronted by the cardboard mechanical non-reality of his antagonists. Büchner arranges them in such a way that the interaction of one with the other continually produces an incongruous effect that points out the rupture and disunion within Woyzeck's tormented soul and within his world.

The Captain, the Doctor and the Drum Major are the caricatures that represent the opposition to Woyzeck's humanity, his tormentors. However, they do not oppose and torment him by choosing to do so, for that choice would indicate a modicum of humanity and reality. Rather, they have no choice, they are

his tormentors by virtue of what they are - unreal and inhuman. They are endowed with the manneristic labels of the particular social class in which they are enrolled. Mechanical and wound up, their personalities have been contracted, reduced merely to some significant characteristic. They manipulate Woyzeck in a cold and unfeeling fashion. With the rigidity of a machine, they are impervious to Woyzeck's plight, unable to comprehend the sensitivities, pains, joys and human emotions of this "misfit" in their midst. And yet, these caricatures retain their connection to life reality because they are what they are by and through the society which they represent. We are therefore unable to dismiss them as fantasies. This recognition is terrifying and ludicrous.

The Doctor who portrays "objective science" sees Woyzeck as a human guinea-pig. Woyzeck the man is of no interest to him. As a result of the diet which he prescribes, Woyzeck loses control of himself. The Doctor, of course, is oblivious to the effect of the reaction on this human being other than its value as experimental results. He is delighted with Woyzeck's symptoms and exclaims;

Doctor: Woyzeck, you have a most beautiful
aberratio mentalis partialis of a
 secondary order! And so wonderfully
 developed! Woyzeck, your salary is
 increased! Idée fixe of a secondary
 order, and with a generally rational
 state....
 (Woyzeck, p. 118).

Participating in another of the Doctor's experiments, Woyzeck tenderly holds a frightened cat. It bites, upsetting him deeply.

Woyzeck: Doctor, I'm shaking.

Doctor: (utterly delighted). Excellent, Woyzeck, excellent!...

(Woyzeck, p. 128)

The actual cause of Woyzeck's disturbance is shown to have been humanely motivated. It is therefore shocking to see the Doctor reacting in the mechanical way which his "profession" has determined. The juxtaposition of these two characters exposes both the Doctor's world and Woyzeck's world, and the produced incongruity reveals a recognizable aspect of reality.

The Doctor performs automatically, deaf to the real world of which he has ceased to be a part. His actions are the actions of a robot. Woyzeck stands alone, a sensitive individual unable to cope with the insensitive, "scientific" world around him. His only choice of survival is to succumb to the irrational demands placed upon him and adapt himself to the madness of the world around him - a ludicrous and terrifying prospect!

Like the Doctor, the Captain is also motivated by fixed ideas. His behaviour is rigid, and he too has lost all sympathy for real human suffering. His reactions to other characters and to situations are expressed in clichés, and

with his trivial moralizings he belabours Woyzeck's already tormented soul.

The Captain is an unnatural representation of a human life. He is a human being deprived of his human vitality because he has incorporated the idioms and gestures which characterize the "position" he maintains in the hierarchy of the military. He represents the bourgeois who without questioning, obeys the commands of his social status and executes them with mechanistic rigidity. He symbolizes the status quo and is no longer free to make his own choices. Yet despite his machinelike behaviour, his repetitious thoughts and his fixed ideas about virtue and morality, not everything in the Captain's life has become static as it has in the case of the Doctor. He is capable of one feeling - fear.

He is obsessed with the passing of time, and the thought of idleness terrifies him. To Woyzeck he admits that "It frightens me when I think about the world...when I think about eternity....Where will it all end?" (Woyzeck, p. 109) He repeatedly reminds Woyzeck to slow down, to take his time;

Captain: Not so fast, Woyzeck, not so fast!
One thing at a time! You're making
me dizzy. What am I to do with the
ten extra minutes that you'll finish
early today?
(Woyzeck, p. 109)

The Captain however, has too much of a static personality to allow this fear to affect him too deeply. It only touches

the surface before it is immediately dispelled by the various postures he assumes, either self-pity or melancholy.

Captain: Woyzeck, I can't even look at a mill wheel any more without becoming melancholy.
(Woyzeck, p. 109)

...

I have such fantasies. I start to cry every time I see my coat hanging on the wall.
(Woyzeck, p. 119)

Superficially, these feelings indicate a deep distress within the Captain, but his expression of them only represents a mechanical rejection of his fear.

He recognizes the symptoms of his fear, for he gets dizzy at the mere thought of time passing by. When he experiences people rushing through life, he also recognizes that their frantic activity aggravates these symptoms. Seeing Woyzeck he says, "I get dizzy around such people." And in the same breath he immediately and almost automatically rejects this feeling;

Captain: Look at him go! Long-legged rascals like him step out like a shadow running away from its own spider. But short ones only dawdle along. The long-legged ones are the lightning, the short ones the thunder. Haha...Grotesque! Grotesque!
(Woyzeck, p. 121-122)

He has visions of his death, his own funeral, and he says; "I can see them now with lemons in their hands." (Woyzeck, p. 120) Again, his fear doesn't penetrate very far before it

is mechanically rejected. It is dispelled by the trivial considerations which comprise his fixed personality. "But they'll say: 'He was a good man, a good man.'" (Woyzeck, p. 120)

Two opposing concepts then are evident within the caricatured figure of the Captain. He embraces both mechanical and distinctly human elements. Their juxtaposition within him creates an effect that is grotesque, for his distorted character, based on fixed ideas and automatic repetitions of hollow sentiments, is profoundly incongruous with his fears and his melancholy. His inelasticity and his rigid behaviour is laughable, but his fears also become our fears when we suddenly discover that his condition could very well be or become our condition.

We stop laughing at the ridiculous repetitions of the mechanical Captain when we realize that a part of the machine is constructed of human emotion. Our laughter then turns to fear through recognition: we recognize ourselves.

The Drum Major who is also mechanical, torments Woyzeck by his attraction to Marie. Like Woyzeck, the Drum Major is composed of basic instincts, but unlike Woyzeck, he has no feelings, no sensitivities. He symbolizes virility pure and simple, and this is what attracts Marie to him.

Whenever the Drum Major confronts Marie, a grotesque

effect is produced because we realize that once again a human being becomes the victim of a mechanism over which he has no control. Both Woyzeck and Marie are victims. Woyzeck because he is robbed of the only other human being that could give him an anchor to life and reality, and Marie is victimized by her own uncontrollable instincts. The torment each one is put to seems absurd and senseless in view of the sexual mechanism that causes the suffering to both Marie and Woyzeck.

The other minor characters which form a significant part of Woyzeck's environment are also distorted in some respect. They too lack many qualities which would make them fully human. The apprentices, despite their use of eloquent phrases and lofty ideas, an incongruity itself in contrast to their status in life, lack of any kind of sensitivity, and they have no other desires beyond their love of a bottle of brandy. Their significance in life and in Woyzeck's world is of questionable value, and their bawdy and loud behaviour underscores their senseless activity with grotesque results. Karl, the idiot, the Grandmother and the circus barker all revolve around Woyzeck, occasionally interacting, and their interaction exposes and reflects life as it is; ugly, distorted and senseless.

The physical and mental distortions of man in Büchner's

work reflect more than the distortions within the physical world, of social conditions and human relations. Büchner himself was agonized over the apparent meaninglessness of life and the pain man had to endure simply because he existed. Unable to find a rational basis for his disillusionment, he shook his fist at the heavens and cursed the creator responsible for the distorted and chaotic world. His own creations reflect these frustrations, and Büchner's characters became victims of a disordered environment in which they were manipulated in a most frightful and senseless manner. If they had feelings, they were ultimately destroyed, if they had hopes and ideals, they too would eventually be crushed, for man was not free.

Not only in Woyzeck is this puppetlike existence of man demonstrated, but rather, it is a theme which Büchner repeatedly emphasizes in his work. In Danton's Death for example, we see through the character of Danton himself the futility of action. Through his inaction, through his fatalistic waiting for death, we see a mechanical existence that just might be our own. In Leonce and Lena, the characters exist in the world of the puppet which provides a mirror in which we see so much of our own world, and the resemblance prevents us from writing it off as pure fantasy. Also in Leonce and Lena, the environment created by King Peter's palace stops short of being a fairy

tale castle when we realize that perhaps we are peeking through the window of an asylum, a hospital for the members of the human race. Some force beyond the control of man is the ultimate manipulator. It destroys our actions, hopes and ideals. By occasionally pulling our strings and causing us to collapse, we are reminded that freedom is merely an illusion and struggle to gain it is senseless.

Danton: What are we but puppets, manipulated on wires by unknown powers? We are nothing, nothing in ourselves: we are the swords that spirits fight with - except no one sees the hands - just as in fairy tales.
(Danton's Death, pp. 36-37)

In this universe without hope, our lives become mechanical. Even against death we are unable to assert ourselves. It too comes mechanically.

Danton: How I wish it were a fight, with arms and teeth tearing and clutching! But it's as if I'd fallen into a mill shaft, and my arms and legs were slowly and systematically being wrenched off by cold physical force. Imagine being killed mechanically!
(Danton's Death, p. 56)

Like Leonce and Lena, we too like to think that we exert our free will, make our own choices and act out our own decisions. In the end however, Leonce and Lena discover that their action has been futile. In the final analysis they find themselves in a preordained situation, and we discover that their free will has only been an illusion. Perhaps we too

suffer from the same illusion, and we fear the day that will reveal to us that we really are the playthings of others, and "nothing in ourselves." (Danton's Death, p. 36)

Leonce: And so, Lena, you see how our pockets are stuffed with puppets and playthings. What shall we do with them? Shall we make mustaches for them and hand broadswords about their waists? Or shall we dress them in frock coats and let them practice infusorial politics and diplomacy, and sit here watching them through our micrisscopes? Or would you prefer a barrel-organ on which milk-white esthetic shrews flit about? Shall we build a theatre?
(Leonce and Lena, pp. 104-105)

We too must face the possibility that we may ultimately be manipulated like Woyzeck, for the puppets that Leonce speaks of are the caricatures that surround Woyzeck and make his life an unbearable torment. These mechanical human beings are not so remote from us either, for in them we recognize our own objective scientific world and our own conventional attitudes and inflexible behaviour.

Language

The particular nuances within Büchner's dialogue serve to fulfill a purpose much greater than simple communication between characters or the unfolding of a story. His insight into the incongruities inherent in man and society allows a manipulation of language, and through repetition and juxtaposition,

the dialogue itself is able to produce a grotesque effect. His use of words becomes a vehicle for presenting these incongruities to his audience.

In Woyzeck where Büchner has dehumanized so many characters and allowed humanity to be represented particularly in the character of Woyzeck, it would seem that fluency of language would be a distinctly human characteristic. Yet Woyzeck is inarticulate, and the caricatures, the mechanical human beings around him have such a command of language that it seems highly incongruous in relation to Woyzeck's segmented and often incoherent speech. The fluency of his tormentors seems even more incongruous when considered in terms of what they are actually saying.

With the expertise of orators, the Doctor and the Captain repeat words and sentiments that express only superficial concern for Woyzeck's humanity. And Woyzeck, sensitive and vulnerable, struggles unsuccessfully without ever being able to verbalize his feelings or somehow express this humanity. It diffuses through to the audience the more forcefully because it reflects Woyzeck's inner state precisely.

The Captain abuses Woyzeck with his persistent criticism of Woyzeck's morality and lack of virtue, yet neither of these words have any meaning for him. He repeatedly tells Woyzeck to slow down, yet the constant repetition of his empty words creates

a rhythmic background that keeps Woyzeck running feverishly back and forth performing his duties. "Not so fast, Woyzeck, not so fast!...Busyness, Woyzeck, Busyness! There's the eternal: that's eternal, that is eternal....But then again, it's not eternal. It's only a moment. A mere moment.... But, Woyzeck: Virtue! Virtue!...You're a virtuous man, a good man, a good man." (Woyzeck, p. 109-110)

Woyzeck's frantic action seems to be underscored by the constant repetitive words of the Captain. A grotesque effect is produced in view of the fact that the Captain is a machine providing the impetus that moves Woyzeck. He is the manipulator, and Woyzeck, the victim of this robot which society has produced. Woyzeck must conform, be manipulated at its will, or continue to suffer the torment which this unfeeling entity can create by further isolating him from a world that no longer has a place for his humanity.

In relation to the Doctor, Woyzeck is almost entirely inarticulate. When the Doctor expounds at great length about "science" and "scientific experiments", Woyzeck, his victim, can only justify his humanity by repeating "But Doctor, sir, when Nature..." (Woyzeck, p. 117), and again,

Woyzeck: You see, Doctor, sir, sometimes a person's got a certain kind of character, like when he's made a certain way. But with Nature...it's like that! How should I explain, it's like —
(Woyzeck, p. 118)

Woyzeck is unable to continue, words fail him.

The juxtaposition of Woyzeck's simplistic attempt to explain his basic feelings, and the Doctor's "scientific" jargon, his verbosity and his Latin terminology, produces an effect that is ludicrous. Yet, in Woyzeck's desperate struggle we also recognize the futility in asserting one's humanity in the face of an existence which has turned to depersonalized, cold and objective scientific processes. Recognition turns the ridiculous to the horrible, and in Woyzeck's condition we see the human condition - a grotesque reflection of our own struggle to maintain our dignity and some degree of meaning in the face of our own cold and objective reality.

When Woyzeck reaches the threshold of his endurance, he suddenly breaks through the barrier of language and articulates in a manner that is highly incongruous with his former speech.

Woyzeck: Why are they rolling in a sea of blood,
one on top of the other, tumbling,
tumbling! Ha, the sea is red! Don't
stop! Don't stop!...Turn and roll and
roll and turn! God, blow out the sun
and let them roll on each other in
their lechery! Man and woman and man
and beast! They'll do it in the light
of the sun! They'll do it in the palm
of your hand like flies!
(Woyzeck, p. 125).

The effect that is produced by this sudden flow of language raises everything to the extremes of his agony. The disparity

between the actual events that cause Woyzeck's suffering, and his reaction to them seems to be exaggerated out of all proportion because of the profound effect these events have on him. They become meaningless and absurd in the face of the pain that is caused.

The compulsive repetition of words, and the discontinuity produced by juxtaposing the fluent language of the mechanical characters and Woyzeck's inarticulate speech serve to emphasize the discontinuity of the scenes and the ideas contained within them.

The rhythm within scenes which do not contain both real and unreal elements in dialogue are often broken by the introduction of a song. The lyrical quality of the song itself, momentarily halts the staccato flow of speech, and the jarring note which results from the contrast, introduces yet another discordant element within the scene.

The songs have a dual function however, and apart from breaking the overall rhythm which is established within the scenes and within the play itself, the ideas contained within them serve to expose the discord within the lives of the characters and the universe as well. The contrasting effect which is produced by the complete innocence with which these songs are sung, and the truth which they contain, is yet another jarring exposure of the real and truthful nature of

man's existence.

The old man at the fair (Scene iv, p. 113), accompanied by his barrel-organ, sings a simple tuneful melody, and a child gleefully dances to the music. Colours, lights and sounds permeate the air. The song, the music and the dancing underscore the gait, the excitement and merry confusion of the fairground. The words which the old man is singing however, contain a profoundly pessimistic thought which is shocking in contrast to the mood in which it is sung, and the atmosphere its melody helps to create.⁹

The incongruity between the words of the song and the blissful activities of the people at the fair makes us realize the superficiality of their lives, and so, the song rings true, for indeed, "There is nothing on this earth will last, ... Soon all is past." (Woyzeck, p. 113) Thus, the

⁹In Scene ii, p. 111, Andres' song achieves the opposite effect, for just as the words of the old man's song emphasize the situation by a process of contrast, the words which Andres is singing serve to accelerate the momentum established by Woyzeck's delirious visions, and just like the two little rabbits that are eating and eating, Woyzeck's cataclysmic world goes on and on until finally it is quiet, "So quiet. Like the world's dead." (Woyzeck, p. 111) The two little rabbits also are quiet, for nothing is left, and all the grass is gone. As the Grandmother says, "Everyone was dead, and there was no one left in the whole wide world." (Woyzeck, p. 113)

child, dancing to the tune of the barrel-organ, is a reflection of ourselves dancing to the tune of the universe. And just as man's existence seems to be out of tune with the world, the old man's words are also in discord with the melodic quality of the song and the confused rhythm it produces within his setting.

Woyzeck's life is also affected by the seeming innocence of the folk tunes, as the scene in the guardhouse exemplifies. (Scene ix, p. 123) Andres' song creates a calming influence when contrasted to the mental torture experienced by Woyzeck through his knowledge that Marie is dancing with the Drum Major. Woyzeck is at the verge of a complete breakdown, and is only able to repeat; "They're dancing, Andres, they're dancing! ... It keeps turning and turning in my head. They're dancing, dancing! ... God damn her, Andres! God damn her!" (Woyzeck, p. 123)

The rhythm produced by the abrupt repetition of words, words which in themselves already give rise to an image that intensifies Woyzeck's whirling frenzy, when juxtaposed with the melodious attributes of the song, the total impact of Woyzeck's torment is magnified and seems to reach the threshold of human endurance. On a deeper level, the meaning contained within the song increases this torment even more, for although Woyzeck himself is not aware of what Andres is actually saying, the

recognition of the truth contained within his outwardly calming influence, produces in us an incongruity that emphasizes the ever increasing breach between Woyzeck and Marie, and between Woyzeck and his world. We are made aware that he is losing his grip on the world, for the pulsating rhythm, created by his repetitious words and further accentuated by the contrasting melody and ideas contained in the song, emphasizes this disunion between the man and his environment.

The texture of the entire play is affected by continually juxtaposing the language and simple melodies, so that the jarring effect which results emphasizes not only Woyzeck's internal disorientation or the disunion of his external surroundings, but the ideas which they project, reverberate Büchner's own discordant and disharmonious view of the world.

Environment

Ever present in Büchner's view of mankind is the domain of man, the earth, the world which he inhabits, and beyond that, the universe of which he is also an inhabitant. The 'place' or the environment in which the characters exist is an ever present influence in the plays. The influence is one of accord. As the playwright views man as distorted, so must his domain be distorted, since in the worlds created by Büchner one does not exist without the other and fate rules

the course of both. To say merely that the elements are in sympathy is not enough, for Büchner conceives a world where even a puddle accentuates the themes. From a puddle on a street to the universe itself, the environment, like the characters, acts and reacts, is manipulated, and is indivisibly tied to the existence of man.

Danton: I don't understand why people don't just plant themselves in the street and laugh in one another's faces. I should think they would have to be laughing from their windows and from their graves, and that heaven itself would burst, and the earth roll over in laughter.
(Danton's Death, p. 31)

Whether Büchner sets the action in the streets of Paris or in an open field just outside of town, the setting is the world in miniature. It reflects the universe, and the universe reflects the state of man. When Woyzeck asks Andres "You know this place is cursed?" (Woyzeck, p. 111) the magnitude of his question has implications affecting even the stars. As the relationship between Woyzeck and his tormentors is disjointed, so is his relationship to his environment. He realizes that all is not well with the world, and he says;

Woyzeck: It's moving behind me! Under me!
(Stamps on the ground.) Listen!
Hollow! It's all hollow down there!
(Woyzeck, p. 111)
...
How bright it is! It's all glowing
over the town! A fire's sailing
around the sky and a noise coming
down like trumpets.
(Woyzeck, p. 111)

The earth below him and the sky above him torment Woyzeck. Nature, like the caricatures, has become distorted and senseless. Yet even this is not enough, for it motivates irrationality, driving man to actions which may parallel its own senselessness. Toadstools growing in an open field seem to induce in Woyzeck the hallucinations of hollow sounds and fire in the sky. His irrational actions are inseparable from his environment, and indeed, the combination of the open field, the light streak in the grass and the toadstools has a distinct effect on him. This relationship creates the impression that at that moment he is actually motivated by the environment, and the environment is merely a reflection, a mirror image of the world.

Realizing the concept of the setting as the world in miniature, a tremendous impact is made by the scenes set in a fair. The implication that the world is a carnival presents the possibility that our world is populated by barkers, freaks and clowns; that our institutions are carnival rides and side show tents; that our environment is permeated by the horror and absurdity associated with the carnival. The prospect of our earth turning to the sound of a calliope is terrifying, yet not so far removed that we do not recognize the implications.

Beyond the obvious parallel of the fair and the world,

the scenes offer a view of a very different environment. The characters on whom the scenes for the most part are focussed, are not human at all, but animals. Animals which have been given human characteristics. To see a monkey as a soldier and a horse as a professor, we are left to question whether or not the opposite is true; whether a professor is a horse and a soldier is a monkey. The barker removes all doubt by clearly stating that this is indeed the case.

In a world where a monkey is capable of performing the duties of a soldier, and a horse the duties of a teacher, there is little sense to the existence of man, particularly when man himself is really little more than an animal. As a result of the juxtaposition, we view Woyzeck from this perspective and follow that with the possibility that we are to be viewed from a like perspective. This terrifying prospect, when recognized as our world, a world where we have become animals in a carnival is absurd, horrible, and finally grotesque.

Significant in Büchner's use of environment are the varieties of environmental influence which he constructs. How very different yet equally relevant are the carnival and the field. Each scene has a distinctly different flavour which is dependent to a great extent on its setting. Exemplary of this is the dance scene at the inn.

The environment, in this instance made up in part by the actions of the characters, is highly active. Not only do we envision a colorfully decorated hall, but a sense of heightened activity is created by the music, the dancing, the shouting and laughter. The swirling of the dancers, the drunkenness and the general disorder of the activities becomes a grotesque madhouse when realized that these people view their environment as an end in itself. They are content with this shallow and meaningless masquerade, and like the people at the fair, they too are fulfilled by what is ultimately just another senseless eddy of life. The apprentices' drunken words, meaningless to his own dulled senses, encapsulate the grotesque irony of life, for how indeed "should the tailor live had not God endowed Man with the need to slaughter himself? (Woyzeck, p. 125)

Definitely removed from this action yet looking in on it, Woyzeck complements Büchner's view of the solitary man. The juxtaposition of the two is enhanced by Woyzeck remaining outside, apart from the activity inside. As Woyzeck's anguish grows with his isolation, he sees the swirling of the dancers seem to intensify to senseless chaos. His anguish then is only heightened further by this, and he begins to lose control, jumping up in anger and slipping back into a stupor. Viewing this environment as a reflection, we are presented with

a possibility that our own anguished isolation could drive us to view our universe as chaotic and senseless. The terror of seeing the universe as unstable is uncontrollable, and Woyzeck's hallucinations become our madness.

The isolation of man is again emphasized when Woyzeck is viewed in the environment created within the barracks. In these depersonalized and sterile surroundings is seen the regimentation and mechanization of life itself. To see Woyzeck desperately trying to find some sort of meaning for his existence within this environment is absurd, for like the universe, it denies man the consolation of a meaningful identity. Woyzeck turns to his material belongings to reassure himself of some sort of meaning, and still he is isolated, for to his fellow man, these things mean nothing, and their significance to life is even less. The hollow philosophizing of the inebriated apprentice once again rings true, for "the world with all its things is an evil place, and even money passeth into decay." (Woyzeck, p. 125) In the end, there is nothing to identify us, and our search for meaning is in vain.

Further, the environment can swallow man, lose him forever in its immensity. Like the little child in the Grandmother's fairy tale, man views his life as a constant search for some reason, for some explanation of his existence, unable

to face the final drop into nothingness. In Danton's Death, the Second Gentleman also realizes this possibility. He is frightened of stepping into a puddle on the street for fear that he might fall through the earth. When he says that "The earth has nothing but a thin crust - a thin, thin crust. I always fancy that I might fall through a hole like that if I were to step into it," (Danton's Death, p. 31), he recognizes the absurdity of both existence and the universe, the potential danger of stepping in the wrong place and disappearing forever and completely alone, like the little child who "sits there to this day, all, all alone." (Woyzeck, p. 133)

Büchner has created environments which reflect the universe as he sees it, a universe that is unstable and chaotic, which wields profound influence. Once again we experience recognition, realizing that this universe is our own as well. Again we stop laughing at Woyzeck's hallucinations or the Gentleman's hesitation to step into a puddle. We begin to look around us, at our own environment, and recognition changes into fear.

Conclusion

The overall environment which Büchner has created in Woyzeck is reflected in each scene, in the characters and in the language with which they communicate. The intensity of expression which each one of these elements puts forth, is

dependent upon the author's high selectivity of incidents, actions and language.

Büchner's use of short scenes limits the development of an idea within the scene, and consequently, rather than ending at, he begins at the peak of intensity. To achieve this, he presents two opposing objects or ideas within the one context. The subsequent contradiction raises the entire concept to an incongruity that can be viewed in a universal perspective. Whenever this occurs, we see the exposure of Büchner's own view of life, the contradictory aspects of the human condition.

Büchner's philosophy is contained and reflected not only within selected situations, but within characters themselves. The incongruities in life are reflected largely in the interaction between Woyzeck and the caricatures. Through a specific selection of contradictory characteristics, in this case, animate and inanimate, Büchner emphasizes these incongruities, and intensifies the plight of man, his manipulation and his senseless activities. Again, the expression is at the peak of intensity for all extraneous material has been discarded, and what remains is compacted in such a way that the intrusion of any opposing element will raise the resulting incongruity to the extremity of expression.

The dialogue of the characters, the language used, underscores the entire work and creates a musical background that is in tune with the discontinuity of thought and the mechanical,

repetitive expressions of its characters. It too reflects the disharmonious nature of not only Woyzeck's internal and external worlds, but of Büchner's concept of the universe as well.

The texture of the entire play reflects Büchner's discordant view of the world and the universe. The circles of significance created by each individual thought and action, by each isolated object within the play, extends to the boundaries of the universe, and has implications that affect all of creation.

The role which the grotesque plays in this context is of profound significance, for the form of the grotesque distorts its subject; it dislocates our comfortable perspective of life in order to create a new awareness of reality. The grotesque functions to expose life, not as we think it should be, but as it is: a gruesome and meaningless spectacle.

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